Commentary

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"The Bell Curve" and Its Critics

Charles Murray

A Jewish Contract With America
Jack Wertheimer

Whose History? Whose Standards?
Walter A. McDougall

Putting Children Last
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The Crime and Punishment Festival
Mark Lasswell

Mark Twain and the Jews
Cynthia Ozick

What's Left of Liberalism
David Brooks

Books in Review: Peter L. Berger / Joseph Shattan / Peter Skerry / John Gross / Wilfred M. McClay

American Troops on the Golan: An Exchange

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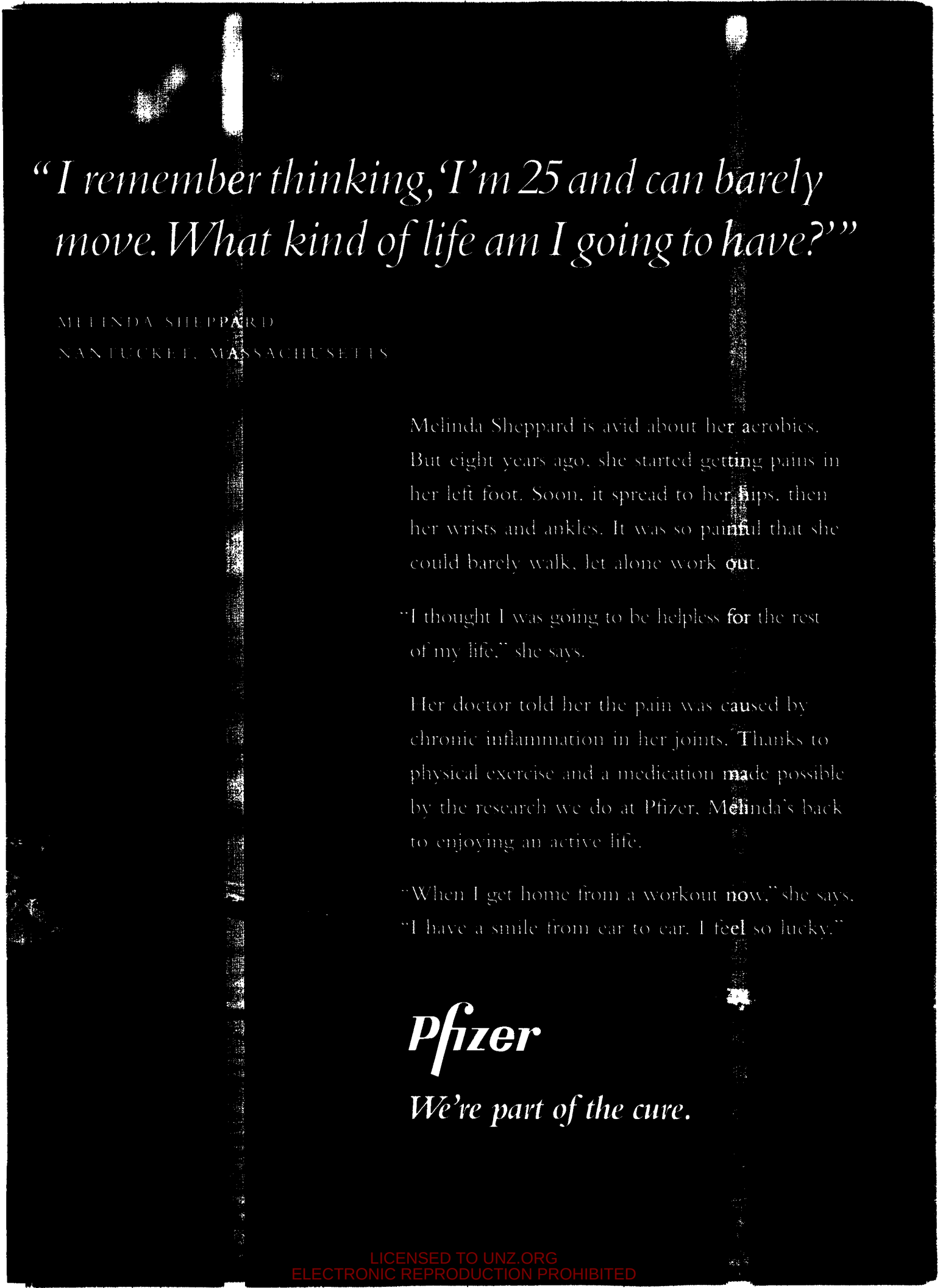

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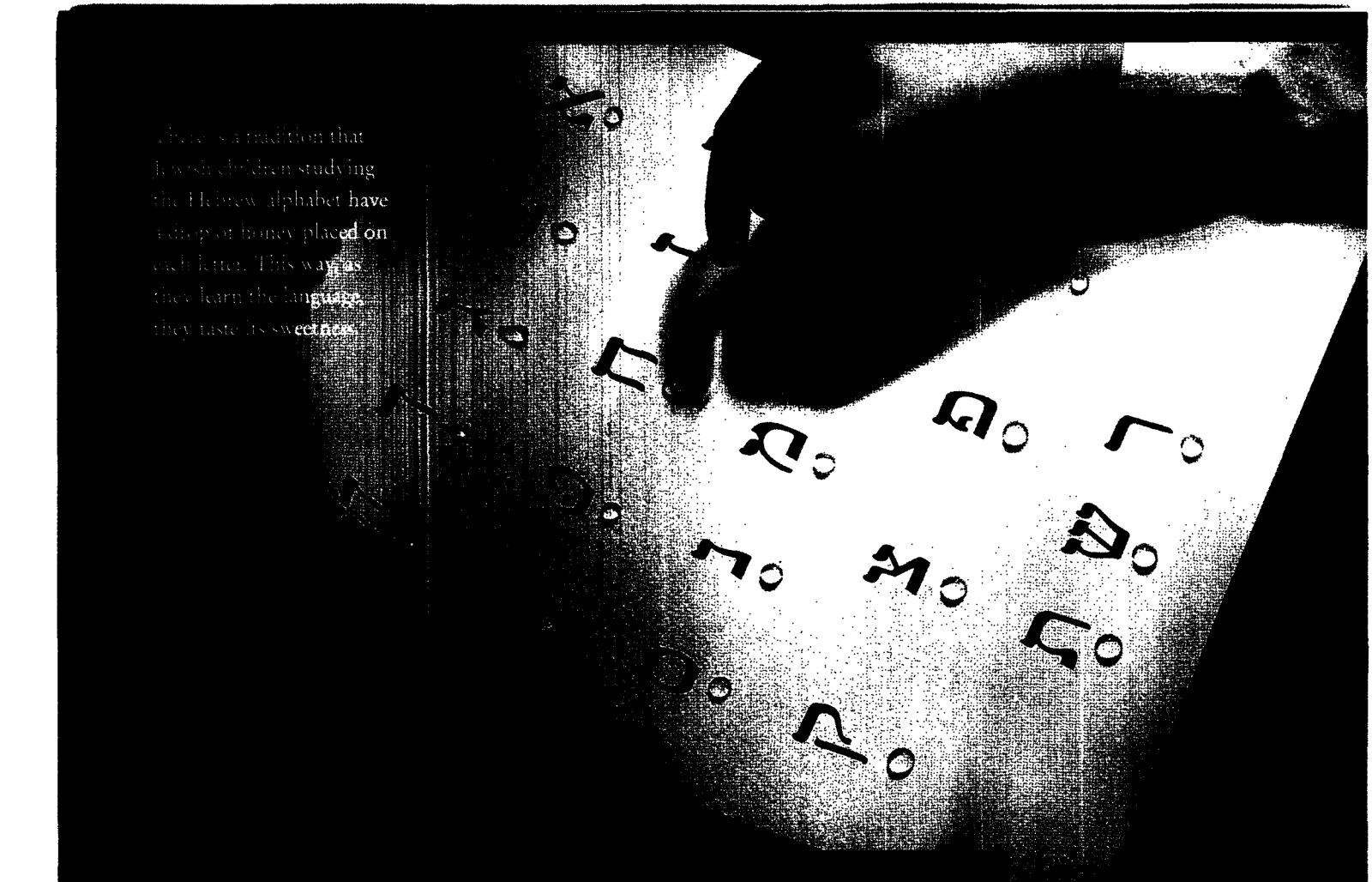

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Letters from Readers

American Troops on the Golan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The Center for Security Policy report, "U.S. Forces on the Golan Heights?" [December 1994], raises a number of important points concerning Golan peacekeeping. However, . . . it fails to address adequately the likely policy context of a decision to participate in Golan peacekeeping. . . . It never seriously devotes itself to a rigorous analysis of the benefits that the United States would derive from a Syrian-Israeli peace. Rather, it concentrates almost exclusively on the potential risks. . . .

For instance, many of those who believe that a Syrian-Israeli peace is in the U.S. interest do so because they believe that it would, *inter alia*, lead to a Lebanese-Israeli agreement, end the military conflict on Israel's borders, and mark a major step toward a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. Some also believe that a Syrian-Israeli peace could help marginalize secular Palestinian rejectionist groups, reduce the influence of Hezbollah, and enhance America's ability to contain Iraq and Iran. The study neglects to consider any of these points.

Nor does the study examine the possible consequences of a failure to conclude a Syrian-Israeli peace, including how the absence of peace, continued turmoil in the region, and perhaps even another Arab-Israeli war could endanger important U.S. interests. . . .

Moreover, the study dismisses the need for an American role in Golan peacekeeping on the grounds that a Syrian-Israeli agreement could just as well be monitored by other means. While this is true, it misses the point; the rationale for a U.S. role is primarily strategic, not military-technical. For different reasons, Israel and Syria may ask the U.S. to play a major role in peacekeeping arrangements in the Golan. Israel—which has openly advocated a U.S. role—may believe that a U.S. presence on the Golan would bolster its deterrent posture at a time when it is making painful territorial concessions, reassure a nervous public of U.S. support, and commit the United States to support Israel in the event of a major Syrian treaty violation. And while Syria has not yet expressed publicly an interest in an American presence on the Golan, it may believe that hosting U.S. personnel on what would be Syrian soil would cement its new relationship with Washington and ensure Israeli compliance with the terms of a treaty. Although the goals of Israel and Syria in requesting a U.S. presence may be contradictory, only the participation of U.S. personel may enable these longtime adversaries to clinch a peace treaty. . . .

The study assigns equal weight to all the risks enumerated. . . . Its failure to consider ways in which risks might be managed or mitigated . . . diminishes its value as a guide to policy.

First, in connection with terrorism, although the threat exists, it is overstated. Syria has ensured nearly absolute quiet in the Golan for twenty years (due to its fear of Israeli retaliation and escalation) and it is hard to see what Damascus would gain by sponsoring terrorist attacks on peacekeepers on its own soil, since the withdrawal of peacekeepers under fire could spark a major confrontation with Israel or perhaps even a war. . . .

Further, analogies comparing the deployment of U.S. personnel in the Golan with earlier ill-fated deployments to Beirut and Mogadishu are misleading. Two differences are critical: any Golan deployment would be charged with peacekeeping between two sovereign, well-ordered states, not warring militias or tribes; moreover, unlike these earlier cases, there is no "nation-building" function associated with a Golan presence.

Terrorism would nonetheless be a threat to Golan peacekeepers. Even after the signing of treaties, extremist Palestinian and Lebanese groups, perhaps supported by Iran, would seek to undermine an Arab-Israeli peace through violence, although their freedom of action would almost certainly be greatly curtailed by a Syrian-Israeli peace. U.S. personnel in the Golan could thus be a lightning rod for terrorists operating in Lebanon. This threat would exist—albeit at lower levels than at present—no matter how large or how well-

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armed the U.S. peacekeeping presence.

However, terrorists based in Lebanon would face considerable obstacles to attacks on Golan peacekeepers. The rugged slopes of Mount Hermon that separate Lebanon from the Golan make movement on foot difficult; terrorists attacking observation posts on the summit of Mount Hermon would require both great skill and luck to avoid early compromise. It would likewise be very difficult to bring these positions under mortar or rocket fire, since the observation posts overlooking Syria cannot be observed from Lebanon. Attempts to attack peacekeepers farther south would either require terrorists to travel great distances undetected on foot (not a trivial task—especially if basic security precautions are taken by peacekeepers) or to use highly inaccurate Katyusha rockets. . . .

The U.S. should not send military or civilian personnel to the Golan until peace agreements between *both* Israel and Syria *and* Israel and Lebanon have been signed, and until the security environment in the area has improved substantially. Accomplishing this latter goal will require Syria to take several steps, including:

- denying safe-haven to all terrorist organizations on its territory and Lebanese territory under its control, and severing all ties with these groups;
- taking steps to disarm the radical Lebanese Hezbollah and stop Iranian military assistance to this organization;
- cracking down on the cultivation of drugs in the Bekaa Valley, which is an important source of income for various terrorist groups.

If these requirements are met, the risk of terrorism will have been reduced substantially. And just as terrorist threats to U.S. personnel in Germany, Turkey, Japan, and elsewhere did not prevent the United States from meeting its global commitments in the past, it should not do so in the future. America's status as a great power and Arab-Israeli peace—an important American interest—justify these risks. And Syria should understand that any backsliding on these requirements after the deployment of U.S. personnel would have grave and dramatic repercussions in its bilateral relationship with Washington, and perhaps other capitals as well. Should Syria refuse to meet these requirements, the United States should refuse to participate directly in Golan peacekeeping.

Second, the risk of renewed war is inherent in any peacekeeping operation. While the possibility of war cannot be ruled out, the likelihood that Syria would attack Israel after signing a peace treaty seems remote, for several reasons: the return of the Golan would eliminate Syria's central grievance vis-à-vis Israel; security arrangements in the Golan would be likely to complicate military operations for Syria; and a Syrian attack on Israel after signing a peace treaty could provoke Israel to abandon nearly all restraint in its response, prompting it to take steps that could threaten the very existence of the Syrian regime. . . .

Third, concerns that American involvement in Golan peacekeeping would cause the U.S. to become a neutral party and undermine the U.S.-Israel special relationship are unfounded. The presence of the U.S. Multilateral Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai has not altered the fundamental pattern of bilateral relations among the U.S., Israel, and Egypt; each relationship has evolved more or less independently according to its own logic. Likewise, since 1974, the U.S. has provided Israel and Syria with data concerning military deployments in the Golan force-limitations zones, derived from regular aerial overflights of the Golan conducted in support of the disengagement agreement. However, the overall pattern of relations—cool ties with Syria, warm ties with Israel—has not changed as a result of this arrangement. Thus, if U.S. peacekeepers are sent to the Golan, the U.S. relationships with Israel and Syria are likely to develop largely in accordance with bilateral considerations, as long as both parties observe the peace treaty. And if Syria violates its treaty obligations, U.S.-Syria ties will be the main casualty; U.S.-Israel ties—which have weathered many difficulties in the past—might be placed under stress, but are unlikely to be damaged by such a development.

Fourth, the presence of U.S. peacekeepers on the Golan need not constrain Israel's freedom of

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action on the ground or limit its ability to take preemptive action, if required. The United States tried to restrain Israel during past crises (such as the 1967 and 1973 wars) even though it had no peacekeepers on the ground, and it can be expected to do so again—whether or not U.S. personnel serve as Golan peacekeepers. What is important is that U.S. personnel on the Golan not pose a *physical* obstacle to Israeli military action, or be located in areas where they would suffer heavy casualties in the event of renewed fighting. Accordingly, any peacekeeping operation should be structured so that U.S. personnel are located away from the likely main battle area in the center of the Golan; for instance, in the northern and southern margins of the Golan. . . .

Fifth, there is no reason to believe that popular admiration for Israel would diminish if U.S. peacekeepers served on the Golan, since the peacekeepers would be there to monitor a peace which is in the U.S. national interest, not to protect Israel. The Israeli military would still have that responsibility, and the U.S.—as part of any peace treaty—would almost certainly assure that Israel remained able to defend itself against any likely combination of enemies. If, heaven forbid, U.S. personnel were to come in harm's way while serving on the Golan, it would have been because they were working to secure U.S. interests there—and not because they were protecting Israel.

Finally, by focusing exclusively on Golan peacekeeping, the study overlooks other important steps that the U.S. could take to support a Syrian-Israeli peace. These include bilateral initiatives with each party, and efforts to build common Israeli-Syrian interests in peace. For Israel, which will probably have to give up strategic assets for peace, the U.S. should enhance its deterrent and early-warning capability and reassure its people through tangible steps to bolster its military capability. For Syria, which seeks rewards in its ties with Washington for making peace with Israel, the prospect of a new, more normal relationship—including improved political coordination, increased trade and investment, and American efforts to solicit international financial and technical assistance—would be on offer. This package, however, needs to be contingent not just on making peace with Israel but also on clear shifts in Syrian behavior elsewhere, especially concerning terrorism.

After a peace treaty (assuming one is eventually concluded), powerful psychological barriers are likely to continue to separate Israel and Syria. Even in an era of peace, Syria is likely to see Israel as a competitor for political influence in the Levant and a dangerous economic rival. Its fears of Israeli economic domination are likely to inhibit economic cooperation between the two countries—even in areas of potential mutual benefit—leading to a "frigid peace." Nonetheless, the United States should work to break down barriers to cooperation in all areas in order to build a more stable basis for a lasting peace between Israel and Syria. In the long term it is these lingering psychological barriers—more than the dangers of Golan peacekeeping—that are likely to pose the main obstacle to a stable and lasting peace, and the main challenge to U.S. diplomacy in the region.

MICHAEL EISENSTADT
Washington Institute
for Near East Policy
Washington, D.C.

THE AUTHORS OF THE CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY REPORT WRITE:*

Michael Eisenstadt criticizes our study for not balancing the costs and risks of a U.S. Golan troop deployment against his statement that "a Syrian-Israeli peace is in the U.S. interest." He stresses the desirability of peace. We recognize the desirability of Syria's ceasing to be hostile to Israel. This does not, however, alter our conclusion that stationing U.S. forces on the Golan is unwise and would tend to undermine rather than advance U.S. interests in the region.

An important distinction exists between peace and a peace treaty. Mr. Eisenstadt does not show why U.S. "monitors" are the key to a Syrian-Israeli peace treaty, let alone to a true peace. Syrian political powers have fought to destroy Zionism and Israel since World War I, and even before. Large ideological, historical, and political issues would shape any Syrian regime's decision to renounce by treaty such important goals as the eradication of the Zionist state and the creation of a Greater Syria incorporating not only Lebanon but Palestine as well. It is ahistorical to say that "the return of the Golan would eliminate Syria's central grievance vis-à-vis Israel." And it is not credible to assert that Assad's decision on these matters hinges on whether we Americans put a few hundred military monitors on the Golan, especially since no one can come up with an actual mission or important function these soldiers are needed to fulfill.

According to Mr. Eisenstadt, Israel might believe that a U.S. Golan deployment "would bolster its deterrent posture" and "reassure a nervous [Israeli] public of U.S. support." But the United States would not benefit from our Israeli friends indulging overinflated hopes. As we explain at length in our study: "[Such a deployment] would increase the likelihood of U.S. opposition to preemptive military action by Israel, no matter how urgent or well-advised. . . . Hence, the effect . . . might be the opposite of that intended: it could reduce fear of Israeli preemption among potential Arab aggressors. . . . [T]his would tend to undermine any Syrian-Israeli peace agreement, decrease regional stability, and increase the risks of war."

Israel's trading strategic high ground for a peace treaty with Assad is a perilous proposition, even for an Israel intensely hopeful about peace. It serves American interests for Israel to see the perils clearly and, if a treaty were made, for Israel to undertake the burdensome measures necessary to compensate as much as possible for the military and intelligence vulnerabilities inherent in relinquishment of the Golan. We should not want the Israeli public to derive "reassurance" from U.S. peace monitors who would not in fact contribute to Israeli security in the event Syria were someday to renew aggression.

The notion that U.S. troops on the Golan "would commit the United States to support Israel in the event of a major Syrian treaty violation" is belied by history. Our nation's record in enforcing com-

* This reply was provided by all the authors of the original special report: General John Foss (USA, Ret.), General Al Gray (USMC, Ret.), Lieutenant General John S. Pustay (USAF, Ret.), General Bernard Schriever (USAF, Ret.), Admiral Carl Trost (USN, Ret.), Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. (USN, Ret.), Douglas J. Feith, Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., Richard Perle, Eugene V. Rostow, and Henry S. Rowen.

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pliance with peace and arms-control agreements has not been good. This is the case even for agreements to which the United States is a party and which deal directly with U.S. security. We are not more vigorous in upholding such agreements on Israel's behalf than we are on our own. In this regard, our study highlights the War of Attrition ceasefire of 1970, when the U.S. government failed to act against a patent, militarily significant Egyptian violation of the U.S.-sponsored agreement between Egypt and Israel. In fact, U.S. troops on the Golan may make the United States even less inclined than it would otherwise be to strain relations with Syria over an apparent treaty violation.

Why might Syria favor a U.S. Golan deployment? Mr. Eisenstadt says that hosting U.S. personnel on Syrian soil might "cement" its new relationship with Washington. What he counts as a benefit, our study identifies as a detriment:

> Syria could be expected: (1) to exploit its position vis-à-vis U.S. forces on the Golan to dilute the U.S.-Israeli relationship, insisting that the United States act "evenhandedly" between Israel and Syria and (2) to press the United States to wipe the slate clean regarding such bilateral problems as Damascus's continuing support for international terrorism, drug-trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and counterfeiting of U.S. currency.

Mr. Eisenstadt also asserts that Syria might view U.S. peacekeepers on the Golan as "ensur[ing] Israeli compliance with the terms of a treaty." But he does not explain how this would work. Assigning U.S. forces a dangerous and costly Golan mission in order to comfort the Syrian regime about possible malefactions by our democratic ally Israel is an idea that would be hard to justify under any circumstances, let alone if our troops actually were to suffer harm. How could one explain to the parents of a U.S. soldier killed by terrorists on the Golan that their son died to reassure Assad of Israel's good intentions? We do not think that our study overstated in any way the substantial risk of terrorism that would face U.S. forces on the Golan.

A key point of our study was that Congress should participate in the decision. A lesson of Somalia is that bad things can happen to U.S. forces even if they are deployed with the intention to promote peace and humanitarian goals. If U.S. troops on the Golan were kidnapped or killed, and if a deployment were not based upon proper congressional deliberation and support, there is greater likelihood that the troops would be pulled out in a way that humiliates and harms the United States and roils the situation on the ground.

If Syria and Israel want to sign a peace treaty, they should do so based on their own realistic assessments of the deal's merits. They should not ask for U.S. forces on the Golan to serve as symbols of vaguely formulated commitments that the United States neither should nor can fulfill. If a Syrian-Israeli treaty reflected true peace—that is, an actual renunciation of Syrian hostility to Israel—then the issue of U.S. peacekeepers would clearly not be of the essence. To state the matter plainly: U.S. forces are being contemplated for the Golan not because they are necessary to achieve peace, but because elaborate arms-control and international-security arrangements give an illusion of cooperation even when there is no real peace. The Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, after all, provides for no foreign peacekeepers, American or other.

We do not think that important U.S. interests should be endangered on the theory that our troops' symbolic value will break "psychological barriers" that are supposedly impeding Syrian-Israeli peace. The war between Syria and Israel is not a misunderstanding. It makes no more sense to attribute it to psychological barriers than to say that World War II was a psychological problem. In efforts to resolve conflicts, it is important to get the nature of the conflict straight.

The First Amendment

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his attack on the Supreme Court's First Amendment jurisprudence ["What To Do About the First Amendment," February], one must admire Robert H. Bork for his courage in challenging the views not only of our national

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Arab-Moslem Fanaticism and Intransigence

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For the last five decades, the world has been convinced, mostly because of unrelenting Arab propaganda, that the conflict between Israel and the "Palestinians" is the root cause of the constant turmoil in the Middle East and that Israel should make "concessions" to the Arabs. But is that the *real* reason for the turmoil and for the violence? Or is there another much deeper, more fundamental reason behind it?

What are the facts?

■ We Americans are reluctant to criticize or even to discuss the religions of others. We consider it a very personal matter. but the profound hatred of the Moslem Arab world against the West, especially against the United States (the"Great Satan") and Israel (the "Little Satan") can only be explained by trying to comprehend the psychology and the principal religious tenets of Islam. Islam is a world-wide religion, but it originated in Arabia and it survives in Arabia in its purest form unaffected by any outside influences. The policies of the Arab countries are totally dominated by Islam. Islam believes itself to be in possession of the holy truth. In the name of that truth, any act of violence is permitted, sanctioned and encouraged. It is perhaps only with that understanding that the acts of savagery, the suicide bombers in Israel, the bombing of the World Trade Center and other acts of murderous fanaticism all over the world can be explained.

■ For the first six centuries after the Moslems spilled forth from the Arabian peninsula, they conquered much of the then known world. The Arab Moslems did in their ascendancy indeed give rise to a substantial civilization. But then, beginning with their expulsion from Spain, a long decline set in that lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. That decline was the more bitter, the more frustrating, because it was inflicted by the hated and despised "infidels". It was something that had to be remedied by whatever means. Injured pride had to be salved; the enemies who caused this intolerable humiliation and this painful injury had to be destroyed.

■ The 20th century brought national independence to the Arab states. Two other fundamental events occurred: 1) The discovery of the world's largest oil deposits under the Arabian peninsula, and 2) The creation, in 1948 of the state of Israel, which ever since its birth has been the concentrated focus of the hatred and venom of all Moslem Arabs, a hatred that unites them, that even surpasses their hatreds against each other, and that has launched them into five disastrous wars against Israel. Even the rape of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq was explained as being a step towards the "liberation of Palestine", a claim so bizarre, so patently absurd that it can only be comprehended and given credence by a mind obsessed with the ideology of Arab Islam.

■ The obsession of the Moslem Arabs with Israel is totally irrational. To have Israel, an advanced highly civilized Western outpost, as an independent country in the middle of the Arab-Moslem world is utterly intolerable to them. That is the reason that, making allowance for the very cold peace with Egypt and the recently concluded peace with Jordan, the 21 Arab states, among them the richest countries in the world, with a combined population of more than 200 million and with a land area greater than that of the U.S., have since the beginning of the century concentrated obsessive ferocity by military, economic, ideological, political, diplomatic, and any other means to destroy the tiny Jewish community of Palestine, and its successor, the Jewish state of Israel—only 4 million people, in a country just one-half the size of San Bernardino County in California.

The recent events in the United States, Argentina and England have sobered many who had believed the Israel-Palestinian conflict to be the cause for the unrest in the Middle East. The fact is that war is endemic in the Arab world and that the Moslem Arabs have been waging war against each other and against their non-Arab neighbors for centuries. But, as much as the Moslem Arabs hate each other, most of them are united in their greater hatred against the "infidel Jews" and their tiny country, and they have built vast war machines for the ultimate "jihad" to chase the Jews into the sea. The insincere focus on the Palestinian plight is designed to divert attention from the many domestic problems and inter-Arab conflicts, and to direct the Moslem Arab frustration against Israel, the "infidel Western outsider". The suggestion that Israel divest itself from its historic heartland, the 2,362 sq. mi, "West Bank" and from the Golan Heights would be a step toward its strategic suicide. The real cause of the never-ending turmoil in the Middle East is the unremitting desire of still most of the Arab Moslem states to destroy Israel, their inability to come to terms with its very existence. That hatred and that intolerance are fueled by Arab-Moslem fanaticism and intransigence and unwillingness to accept diversity in the region. Only when that will be overcome can peace and tranquility finally come to the Middle East.

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icons, Jefferson and Madison, but of the esteemed Justices Holmes and Brandeis as well. But with all due respect to Judge Bork, much of what he has written is open to serious question. To respond adequately to his far-ranging critique would require enough space for a lengthy essay. Since this is not feasible, I will confine my response to what he writes on the very first page of his article:

> At this moment, the most prominent issue involving the religion clauses of the First Amendment stems from the decision in *Engel* v. *Vitale* (1962), and subsequent cases, prohibiting prayer, Bible reading, or even a moment of silence in public schools.

In *Engel*, the Supreme Court held, in substance, that it is not the proper business of a state to compose prayers for American schoolchildren to recite. There is nothing in its decision in *Engel*, or in any other Supreme Court ruling, to prohibit any student in public school from praying, orally or silently, any time the spirit moves him or her to do so. In fact, students are perfectly free to pray today, in the manner of their own faith, in school lunchrooms, playgrounds, even in class quietly before a test—as long as school routine is not disrupted thereby.

Further, under the federal Equal Access Act, where secondary schools allow noncurriculum-related student-activity clubs to meet during noninstructional time, student religious clubs also meet for religious discussion and group prayer. Parents who deem it important that their children pray during the school day are free to guide them accordingly. All of this means that authentic voluntary prayer is entirely permissible in public schools right now. Hence, there is no religious-liberty need for Newt Gingrich's proposed school-prayer amendment (quoted in full by Judge Bork) to tamper with the First Amendment for the very first time in our history.

A public school, obviously, is not a house of worship. What is not legal (nor should it be) is for prayer to be imposed on children by other children's parents, whether parents may want this or not. The right to engage in voluntary prayer does not include the right to have a captive audience listen—or to coerce other students to participate. In our

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pluralistic society, public schools are places for students of all faiths—or none.

Concerning a moment of silence, in *Wallace* v. *Jaffree* (1985), the Supreme Court held that such a law in Alabama violated the establishment clause because its "*sole* purpose" was to promote prayer in public schools. But, contrary to what Judge Bork indicates, the Court has never prohibited a neutral moment of silence, without such intent, if the purpose were no more than to settle students down, for whatever thoughts they may wish, before the start of the school day. If that is all that is sought, however, there is no need to amend the Constitution, or even to pass legislation to achieve it. Any teacher or principal can simply direct it.

Judge Bork then proceeds to write as follows:

> The First Amendment's establishment clause—"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"—clearly precludes recognition of an official church, and it can easily be read to prevent discriminatory aid to one or a few religions. But it hardly requires the conclusion that government may not assist religion in general or sponsor religious symbolism. . . . The history of the formulation of the clause by Congress demonstrates that it was not intended to ban government recognition of and assistance to religion; nor was it understood to require government neutrality between religion and irreligion.

According to Judge Bork, then, it is the Supreme Court's misreading of the history of the establishment clause that has resulted in so many of its wrong-headed decisions relating to the separation of church and state.

Interestingly, in an article in COMMENTARY ["School Prayers & the Founding Fathers," September 1962], Professor Leonard W. Levy, author of many authoritative books and articles on constitutional law, reached precisely the opposite conclusion—and documented it thoroughly. While acknowledging that the Framers of the establishment clause were not all of one mind, Professor Levy found that, predominantly, they certainly did intend its language to bar nonpreferential government support of religion.

Professor Levy traced the drafting history of the establishment clause, both in the House and the Senate of the First Congress. In the Senate, three motions, which expressed the narrow intent that the clause bar only preference for any one religious "sect" or "denomination" above others, were introduced and defeated. Nor was the House any more satisfied with language that would merely have barred religious preference. In sum, the First Congress carefully considered—and rejected—language which would have embodied the narrow interpretation espoused by Judge Bork.

It should be stressed that the original Constitution does not confer on the federal government any power whatever to deal with religion in any way, shape, or form. Considering that six of the original states had multiple religious establishments, this omission was scarcely inadvertent. The Framers knew what they were doing. For the new federal government they clearly had a different vision, including (in Article VI) no religious test for holding national public office.

In the words of Professor Levy, to argue

> that the amendment permits government aid and support to religion in general or to all churches without discrimination, leads to the impossible conclusion that the First Amendment *added* to Congress's powers. There is nothing to support this notion. Every bit of evidence we have goes to prove that the First Amendment, like the others, was intended to *restrict* Congress to its enumerated powers. Since Congress was given no power by the Constitutional Convention to legislate on matters concerning religion, and therefore could not support all religious groups nonpreferentially, Congress would have had no such power even in the absence of the First Amendment. . . . The Bill of Rights, as Madison said, was not framed "to imply powers not meant to be included in the enumeration."

Most constitutional scholars, as well as most Supreme Court Justices, have agreed with Professor Levy. In *Everson* v. *Board of Education* (1947), all nine Justices then sitting agreed that the establish-

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ment clause forbids not only state practices that "aid one religion . . . or prefer one religion over another," but also those that "aid all religions." In fact, a more recent case cited by Judge Bork, *Lee* v. *Weisman* (1992), in which the Court ruled that a rabbi's invocation at a public-school graduation ceremony violated the establishment clause, is apposite. Justice David H. Souter's concurring opinion in *Lee*, joined by Justices John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor, included an extended review of the early history, in which he said:

> What we thus know of the Framers' experience underscores the observation of one prominent commentator (Professor Douglas Laycock of the University of Texas Law School), that confining the establishment clause to a prohibition on preferential aid "requires a premise that the Framers were extraordinarily bad drafters—that they believed one thing but adopted language that said something substanially different, and that they did so after repeatedly attending to the choice of language."

SAMUEL RABINOVE
Legal Director
American Jewish Committee
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I sympathize with the desire to infuse the "naked public square" with a hefty dose of morality via religion, Robert H. Bork's prescription for a permissive interpretation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment won't do.

That clause is arguably the greatest piece of political wisdom enshrined in the Constitution by the Founding Fathers, explaining why the U.S. Constitution has reached the ripe old age of 206 years while hundreds of constitutions in Europe have been trampled and torn up since 1789.

Since the days of Constantine, and all the way to the 20th century, altar and throne have been two sides of the same coin in Europe—and the price has been endless mayhem. Why was the United States spared the great schisms, St. Bartholomew's Night, the murderous religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries? Because, in their wisdom, the Founding Fathers decided that state and church do not mix.

In Europe, popes were always fighting potentates, and vice versa, for supreme power—or conjointly against the "heretics" of the day. How much blood was spilled in the name of "*cuius regio, eius religio*"? And no wonder: if there is only one path to God (namely, mine!), and if kings must be anointed by the deity or his self-chosen vicars, then there is a powerful incentive for either side to bring the other to heel—with the sword or the stake, if need be.

Nor is this ancient history—look at Bosnia. Or at a less dramatic case like Germany, which has three established religions: Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Judaism (with the state collecting and distributing church taxes as well as teaching religion in the schools). Why not Islam (of which there are three million adherents in Germany) or, for that matter, Seventh Day Adventism? Once the temporal and spiritual realms are in cohabitation, each will seek to intrude on, and take from, the other. And since the "true faith" is not a matter of ecumenical laissez-faire, the zero-sum game for favors both material and symbolic will turn particularly nasty.

Why then jiggle with the strict separation that has served the United States so well for 200 years? Indeed, this arrangement whereby the churches cannot rely on the state as they seek to gather their flocks has made for a much more vibrant religious life in the United States (cf. Tocqueville) than in Europe. Those who decry the moral vacuity of politics in the United States must find other ways to infuse values in the public sphere than by nudging the church into the capitol and vice versa.

JOSEF JOFFE
Munich, Germany

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Interpreting the First Amendment so as to defend the role of religion in public life, as Robert H. Bork does in his article, . . . is frightening.

The issue of original intent . . . may function as a guide for interpreting the Constitution but must not be used as a bludgeon to prevent change in a changing society. The increasing complexities of American life, . . . along with almost exponential advances in scientific and technological knowledge, . . . have drastically altered society. As a result, the original intent of laws developed primarily for a rural, relatively sparsely populated, and homogeneous agricultural society with comparatively slow communica-

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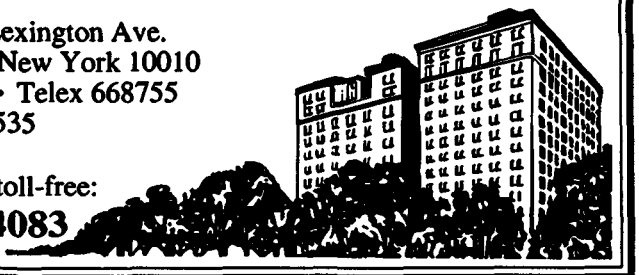

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tions might no longer be appropriate for a sprawling, densely populated, highly mechanized, extremely pluralistic, urban society with virtually instantaneous means of communication.

Traditions . . . just may have to give way so that new traditions can evolve. Where is it written that old traditions must remain in place and that the law must be bent to retain these traditions, even if they do harm? And harm they do. . . . Is Judge Bork suggesting that when it comes to religion the Court should not be concerned with the consequences of its decisions?

Public prayer, including prayer in school, is an example of doing harm. Prayer harms the intellectual development of children. I and many others find the concept of nonsectarian prayer offensive and insulting. All too often I and other non-Christians were—and still are—subject not to nonsectarian prayers but to Christianized prayers, which I find to be at least as repugnant as, if not more so than, nonsectarian prayers. . . . Neither daily school prayer nor Bible reading will make a person more moral. . . .

In discussing the *Kiryas Joel* decision, Judge Bork states that the majority of Supreme Court Justices are either hostile to religion or do not understand what religious observance is all about. But he provides no evidence for this assertion, and we are expected to accept it simply because he is the voice of authority, a position I find all too prevalent among arch-conservatives with a religious bent and fundamentalists.

As long as there are jurists manifesting Bork-type thinking on the First Amendment, and as long as there are religionists who insist that their beliefs be enshrined in law and imposed on those who believe differently, . . . the issue of religion in public life . . . will continue to be an ongoing source of divisiveness in pluralistic American life. . . .

Madison, Jefferson, and Adams were right about . . . the need for an absolute separation of church and state. The Founding Fathers were all too aware of what happens when religion intrudes in public life, especially when it is married to the state as it was in Europe. . . . They designed the Bill of Rights to protect the rights of minorities, heretics, and dissenters. And they created a secular republic. It should remain one. . . .

SHELDON F. GOTTLIEB
University of South Alabama
Mobile, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While Robert H. Bork raises some interesting First Amendment issues, his prescriptions are no panacea. In summary fashion, he writes that "Religious speech and symbolism should be permissible on public property."

A few summers ago, while visiting Mt. Rushmore, I went to a concert which accompanied a daily sunset ceremony held throughout the summer. Much to my surprise, the choir sang a number of revivalist songs, all of the Christian faith. I cannot imagine—Judge Bork's critique of contemporary First Amendment law notwithstanding—that the Founding Fathers would have countenanced such a display on federal property. Moreover, to the extent that any taxpayer funding was involved, the Supreme Court's expansive view of "standing" in *Flast* v. *Cohen* would allow someone like me to challenge this use of funds although, concededly, the "direct impact" is perhaps ephemeral.

In any event, this one example amply illustrates that the open-ended policy recommended by Judge Bork is overinclusive: any retreat from a strict separation of church and state must be carefully measured, not undertaken through wholesale pronouncements that would do more harm than good.

ADAM SIMMS
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Without a single citation of any historical evidence, Robert H. Bork announces that "the original understanding of those who framed and enacted" the First Amendment should dictate that it applies only "to *speech*, not to nonverbal expression"; that "it should protect the dissemination of ideas, not the individual's desire for self-gratification"; and that speakers who "incite racial hatred" or advocate "violence and law violation" without proof of any "direct connection" between actual violence and such speech have no right to be part of "the marketplace of ideas." . . .

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Judge Bork is oblivious to the threat posed by vague and ambiguous laws left to the unbridled discretion of bureaucrats, policemen, prosecutors, and judges. Are we to leave to government officials philosophical questions such as whether the speech of the accused represents the "dissemination of ideas" (which Judge Bork would protect) or the "desire for self-gratification" (which he would not)? And for one so devoted to the precise text of the Founding documents, Judge Bork's disdain for "self-gratification" is hard to square with the "pursuit of happiness." (The Framers were simply not as ascetic as he would prefer.)

Without the "clear-and-present-danger" test which Judge Bork despises, are we to leave to the current political regime the power to decide whether speech advocates "violence and law violation"? Martin Luther King, Jr. advocated law violation. Many segregationists accused him and other civil-rights leaders of "fomenting violence." Under Judge Bork's view of the law, upon the verdict of twelve jurors, King and most political dissidents would be sent to jail, or worse.

And what about "inciting racial hatred"? For someone who readily rejects "silly regulations, such as campus speech codes, that try to outlaw offensiveness," Judge Bork is caught with his political correctness showing. Echoing Holmes, Justice Douglas wrote that "every idea is an incitement." No free people can authorize its government to punish hateful speech in the name of promoting racial harmony. But countries without our First Amendment tradition of robust, wide-open, and uninhibited debate (which Judge Bork seeks to dismantle) do just that. For example, since 1992, the German government has banned eleven far-right organizations. It is illegal in Germany to make statements that are "hostile to the constitution." The German courts found that these groups failed to show they "have sufficient seriousness" in their efforts to "influence the political climate in the Bundestag."

Would Judge Bork prefer to substitute these elusive standards, interpreted by powerful officials, for the principles developed by Jefferson and Madison and Justices Holmes, Brandeis, Jackson, Douglas, and Brennan? Judge Bork concludes his piece with an expression of hope that the 1994 elections signal a "more conservative climate" in which his views may blossom. For those who remain true to the vision of the First Amendment as a bulwark against censorship and a protection for individual rights, let's hope not.

STEPHEN F. ROHDE
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert H. Bork has always seemed hostile to the First Amendment. He used to argue that it should protect only purely political speech, but he has thankfully now abandoned that position. He still thinks, however, that it should not provide protection to nonverbal expressions such as painting, music, and dance—regardless of how political the message is. I am an attorney and teach First Amendment law at UCLA and I suspect most Americans would be surprised and shocked to learn that in Judge Bork's world they would not have a constitutional right to paint any picture or play any music they wished to. But in "What To Do About the First Amendment," he goes even further. Now Judge Bork wants to suppress even purely political speech that he thinks is too dangerous for the public to hear. For a man who claims to be against elitism and for freedom, this is one heck of an odd position.

Trying to gain as much high ground as he can with this anti-populist notion, Judge Bork focuses upon speech that advocates the overthrow of the government and speech that advocates unlawful or violent activity. Since such speech is already unprotected by the First Amendment if it is directed to inciting imminent lawless action (and likely to produce such action), it is perfectly clear that Judge Bork is talking about pure speech—pure political speech—that is not threatening any immediate harm. It is the cumulative social harm that arises from anti-social ideas that troubles Judge Bork. And he apparently is quite willing to let the government decide what speech presents such dangers to the nation.

Our own history tells us how dangerous it is to allow the govern-

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ment to decide what speech constitutes antisocial activity. Indeed, the 1919 case of *Abrams* v. *United States*, which Judge Bork cites in his article, eloquently illustrates this danger. In that case, four Russian refugees were accused of tossing leaflets from a building that, in fiery language, denounced America's recent invasion of Russia. They were convicted under a statute that made it a crime to "utter, write, print, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" about the Constitution or the military. Three of the defendants were sentenced to twenty years in prison; the fourth, a young woman, was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. The Supreme Court rejected their First Amendment defense and affirmed their convictions and lengthy sentences.

Shortly before the *Abrams* case was decided, the famous socialist Eugene V. Debs was convicted under the same statute for making a speech obliquely criticizing the draft law. He was sentenced to ten years in prison. The Supreme Court unanimously affirmed his conviction and sentence (with Justice Holmes writing for the majority). The secretary of the Socialist party was also convicted under the same statute for advocating peaceful protest of the draft law. Again, the Supreme Court unanimously affirmed the conviction.

Incredibly, until the free-speech movement of the 1960's, there were almost no Supreme Court decisions clearly protecting a citizen's right to express dissident political views—notwithstanding the existence of the First Amendment, which had been on the books since 1791. That is why I shudder when Judge Bork casually suggests that the government ought to be free to ban political speech that it believes threatens harm to the peace and stability of the nation.

Judge Bork's "legislative intent" argument also fails. He derides those who say that the Founding Fathers viewed the First Amendment as protecting the public's right to advocate the overthrow of the government, proclaiming that "the Founders held no such position." But he offers no evidence to support his position, and I doubt he has any. Indeed, I think perhaps Judge Bork should reread the Declaration of Independence, where the Founders expressed their views as follows: "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends [life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness], it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government."

JEFFREY VALLE
Los Angeles, California

ROBERT H. BORK writes:

Samuel Rabinove's version of the religion clauses of the First Amendment rests on a 1962 article by Leonard Levy. Mine rests upon the three books I cited. These books, all solidly researched, support the proposition I advanced: the establishment clause "hardly requires the conclusion that government may not assist religion in general or sponsor religious symbolism." Mr. Rabinove does not deal with the evidence of the original understanding of the establishment clause cited in my article. There are additional facts to support my view.

In the First Congress Madison said, of a draft that closely resembled the amendment ultimately adopted, that "he apprehended the meaning of the words to be, that Congress should not establish a religion, and enforce the legal observation of it by law, nor compel men to worship God in any manner contrary to their conscience." This was clearly not the strict separationist view Madison advocated for Virginia in his "Memorial and Remonstrance," but a much less stringent prohibition calculated to gain the assent of Congress and ratification by the states.

The First Congress, which proposed the First Amendment, also reenacted the Northwest Ordinance for the governance of the Northwest Territory, stating that religion, morality, and knowledge were necessary to good government, and providing land grants for schools that were not restricted to public schools. A later Congress voted financial support for the Kaskaskia Indians to provide a Roman Catholic priest and a church. The First Congress provided land to the Ohio Company for the support of religion, and Congress subsequently authorized the state of Ohio to sell that land and use the proceeds "for the support of religion . . . and for no other use or purpose whatsoever."

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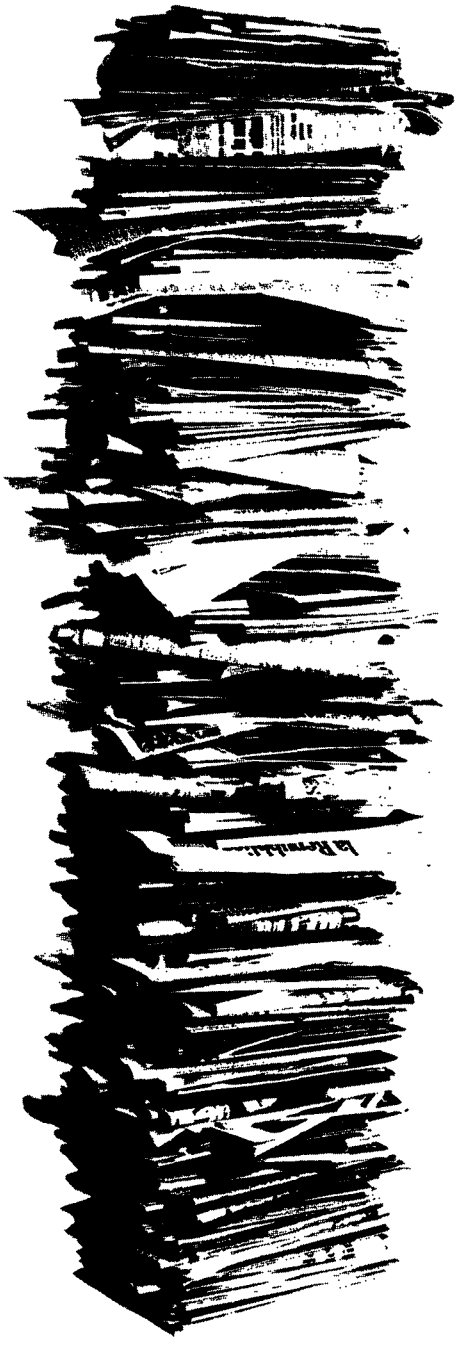

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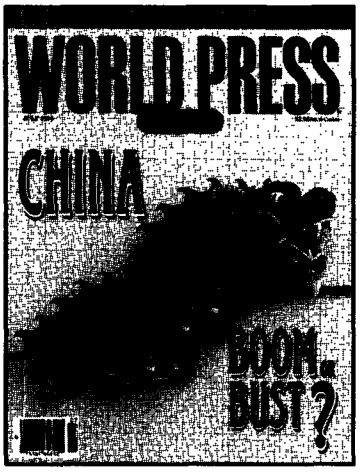

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These episodes suggest that financial support for religion was not regarded as an establishment of religion. Then Justice Rehnquist cited this evidence in his dissent in *Wallace* v. *Jaffree* and concluded, correctly, that "The 'wall of separation between church and state' is a metaphor based on bad history." The metaphor, of course, was Jefferson's. He was not a member of the First Congress and was in France during the debate over the First Amendment.

The proper view of the establishment clause does not involve the anomaly that the clause added to Congress's powers. To the contrary, there being apprehension about what those powers might turn out to be, as, for instance, under an expansive view of the necessary-and-proper clause, the amendment made sure that the powers did not include the establishment of religion. That was a precautionary subtraction, not an addition.

It is simply not correct that *Wallace* v. *Jaffree* struck down an Alabama law whose "sole purpose" was the promotion of prayer in public schools. The statute authorized teachers to hold a one-minute period of silence for "meditation or voluntary prayer." Prayer was one option, the choice was the student's, and since any prayer would be silent, no other student would be required to hear it. The idea that prayer was the only purpose of the statute rests on the remarks of one legislator after the law had been enacted. No doubt some legislators hoped some students would choose to pray, but that hardly constitutes the establishment of religion.

Josef Joffe's remarks, while interesting, are largely beside the point. Nondiscriminatory assistance to all religions, as in the provision of school buses, is hardly likely to set off a sectarian bloodbath. Nor is it accurate to say that strict separation has served the United States well for 200 years. There was no strict separation for at least 150 of those years, during which time we got along fine.

I am sorry to have frightened Sheldon F. Gottlieb. The original understanding of the principles of the Constitution is all that gives judges the power to set democratic decisions at naught. If the country has changed, appropriate new principles can be enacted by statutes or by constitutional amendments. I should have thought it did not need saying that nothing in my article suggests that any religious beliefs be enshrined in law or imposed on anyone. The silly rhetoric about "arch-conservatives with a religious bent" does not merit a response.

I hardly know what to say about Adam Simms's experience with Christian songs at Mt. Rushmore, except that the government surely would not prevent the singing of Jewish or Islamic songs at the same location. That being the case, I am sure the Founding Fathers would have countenanced, and probably welcomed, precisely such a display on federal property.

Stephen F. Rohde asks for historical evidence about the meaning of the speech clause. There is very little, except that the clause explicitly refers only to speech. Nor do I have disdain for self-gratification, which I engage in regularly. My point was that self-gratification is not peculiar to speech; and if we are looking for functions that make speech unique, and so singled out for protection, that is not one of them. Citing Martin Luther King in no way justifies the advocacy of law violation. I do not recall that King ever contended that such advocacy was protected. If anyone has a right to such advocacy, everybody does. The advocacy of racial violence does not seem to me an example of "robust, wide-open, and uninhibited debate." Indeed, it is not a debate at all.

Contrary to Jeffrey Valle, I am not hostile to the First Amendment, merely critical of decisions that deform it. Mr. Valle seems to confuse what I think democratically-elected legislatures may constitutionally do with a desire on my part to suppress speech that I think too dangerous for the public to hear. The *Abrams* and *Debs* cases, as Mr. Valle describes them, do not fall in the category of speech I think should be prohibitable. It is particularly nonsensical to quote the Declaration of Independence's enunciation of a right to alter or abolish government. That right was asserted against an English government in which Americans had no say and which they regarded as tyrannical. Having established a representative government here, the Founders proceed-

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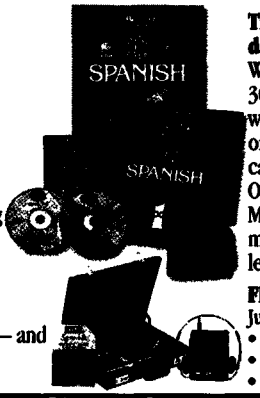

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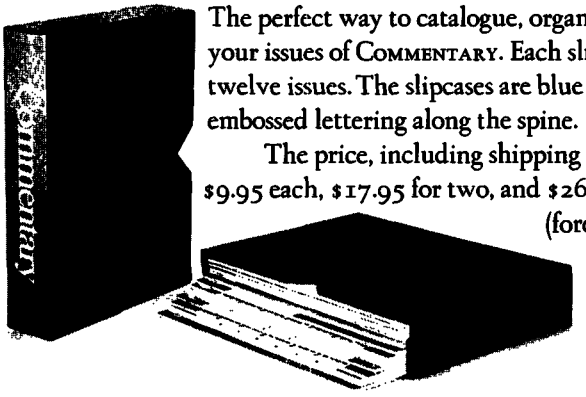

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Commentary

ed to enact laws that denied any right of revolution on these shores.

"A Feminist Seder"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Wendy Shalit ["A Feminist Seder," January] went to the seder in the spirit of a heckler, and her behavior there was rude. It appears that COMMENTARY believes it was all right for her to turn a religious observance into a discussion forum.

I am writing from the perspective of a feminist who became bat mitzvah as an adult, in part to demonstrate to two college-age daughters that their parents had an investment in being Jewish. My talk at that time was entitled, "Can a Feminist Be Bat Mitzvah?" It has taken me many years to find the answer to that question. In brief, it entails having faith in the evolving nature of our faith, so that I can believe not in a Judaism that was, which showed few traces that women were part of the Jewish world. Nor is it a faith in the Judaism I experienced in growing up. My remaining Jewish depends on the changes taking place in Judaism led by the women rabbis and scholars who are retrieving a place for women in our history from the clues that are left to us, and, if necessary, creating new rituals to include women.

The feminist seder, as I know it and treasure it, is one aspect of this effort. As an example of what the feminist seder can be, let me cite a bit from ours, which is celebrated as a joint effort of Na'amat and the Rosh Hodesh group of Congregation Beth Am of Penn Valley in Pennsylvania. We end with four participants holding two handmade prayer shawls to form a symbolic tent, and we invite participants to sip from their fourth cup of wine as they pass under the "tent" as a metaphor for our having refurbished the House of Israel so that women can feel comfortable in it. We have been fortunate to have the participation of Rabbi Claire Magidovitch Green, who has helped us to keep our service authentically Jewish, in our planning.

Your readers would not learn from this article that there are many women's seders, some of which avoid using the word "feminist," and they would not learn why the traditional seder is sexist in both language and content. To give a few examples: it celebrates

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"men" as having been liberated from Egypt and four kinds of sons to be taught about the meaning of Passover. The sages who are quoted are male. Miriam the Prophetess and the midwives Shifrah and Puah who risked their lives to defy Pharaoh are not given due respect. Beyond this, in too many homes the traditional seder means that women do all the cooking and serving, and men recite the prayers; the woman's seder may offer women the first experience of participating fully in the ritual.

In emphasizing the way in which the feminist Haggadah at her college varies from the traditional text, Miss Shalit ignores, or perhaps shows her ignorance of, the laudable custom of using the season of our liberation and the seder format to celebrate or emphasize the freedom struggles of our contemporary community: Soviet Jewry, the Holocaust, the foundation of the state of Israel, etc. Celebrations of such seders are not intended to preempt remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. Of course, women's seders are not held on the traditional seder nights. That is when we celebrate our sacred history together. The idea of the woman's seder is not to supplant tradition but to augment and enrich it. . . .

NORMA ROLNICK
Wynnewood, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Wendy Shalit opens her piece with an allusion to her favorite storybook characters. When I read her incisive article, I thought immediately of the small boy who, surrounded by ooh-ers and aah-ers, knew that the emperor had no clothes. She has successfully exposed the degree to which the so-called feminists at the feminist seder, their verbal and ideological trappings notwithstanding, were equally impoverished. No, they did not lack clothes, but they were certainly devoid of historical perspective, tolerance for other viewpoints, and any sense at all of true Jewish tradition.

The only thing I regret is that they gave the positive, life-affirming, and empowering aspects of feminism a bad name!

JOAN SWIRSKY
Great Neck, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an alumnus of Williams College and its Jewish Association, I read Wendy Shalit's "A Feminist Seder" with great interest and amusement. While we had our various left-wing groups when I was at Williams, many of whose members were Jewish, pushing their progressive agendas on campus, few of their silly notions ever intruded into the actual prayers of our Friday night services or seders. Indeed, as I recall, the most feminist thing our small group did was to count women in the *minyan*. And often even when we did count women, we found that we still did not have ten Jews to pray.

So, naturally, I sympathize with current members of the Williams College Jewish Association as they consider means to "get more people to attend Sabbath services," as Miss Shalit reports. But I doubt they will succeed in their various attempts at outreach to various "minority" groups. . . . In fact, if the Jewish Association were to succeed in reaching out to these groups, it might have to cater its services to reflect their agendas, which generally have little to do with Judaism. And this would destroy the sense of Jewish community that existed when I was at Williams—and that I still found when I visited last fall.

Miss Shalit is correct to quote Emil Fackenheim on the need for Jewish life to have a claim to authenticity with our past as authority, and I found that authenticity in our services at the Williams College Jewish Association. I, who had grown up in a Reform congregation, whose religious school experimented with some of the 1970's feel-good courses on spirituality (e.g., classes not on Torah but on such things as "Values Clarification"), attended services regularly as an undergraduate. And within that small Jewish community at Williams, I experienced a sense of belonging and spiritual enrichment that I had not found in my Jewish life since I was a small boy.

The somewhat traditional format of services at Williams made me feel that I was participating in something greater than myself as it reminded me of the wonders of God's creation. And without catering to the various idiosyncrasies of the diverse group of Jews who attended, our services did create a sense of *Jewish* community. Per-

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haps if the current Jewish Association adopts methods of outreach to various groups on campus, it will succeed in bringing more people in on Friday evenings. I fear, however, that that success would be at the expense of the sense of Jewish community that more traditional services provide for the faithful few who already attend.

Wendy Shalit's article, while disturbing in reporting how feminism and other politically-correct notions are seeping into our services, does provide some sense of comfort: at least one Jew at Williams today is still concerned with promoting that sense of community that mattered so much to me (and several others) when I was there.

B. Daniel Blatt
Arlington, Virginia

Wendy Shalit writes:

I am utterly perplexed as to what behavior of mine Norma Rolnick could have possibly construed as "rude." As I reported in my article, I asked once, at the beginning of the seder, if I might pose a question, and when I was told that I could not, I reclined in proper Passover posture and said not a word for the remainder of the seder.

As evidence that the traditional Passover seder is "sexist in both language and content," Miss Rolnick repeats the distortion for which I originally faulted the campus feminists: that the Haggadah only "celebrates 'men' as having been liberated from Egypt." This is simply false. If one were to take the time to read the Haggadah, one would find that the Hebrew is not, in fact, "sexist." In the famous phrase, *Avadim hayinu* ("we were once slaves"), for example, the "we were" is not male-specific. And when we read that the Torah is given to us, the "us" is all of us, not just men. True, there is mention of patriarchs in the Haggadah, but in most of the seder songs, when the patriarchs are mentioned, so are the matriarchs.

Though Miss Rolnick faults the Haggadah for not singling out heroic females such as Miriam, Shifrah, and Puah, had she looked a little closer she might have noticed that no males are singled out, either. Even Moses is not given "due respect," so to speak, in the Passover Haggadah, and with good reason—to draw attention to the deeds of a Moses or a Miriam would have detracted from the message that God was responsible for the Exodus.

Miss Rolnick also faults the traditional Passover seder for quoting only male sages. Well, sorry, but with the exception, perhaps, of Beruriah or one of Rashi's learned daughters, all the sages were male. And so what if my gender never produces a Maimonidesette or a Nachmanidesette? Should I be made to feel ashamed? I would argue that this is a problem only for women who have already trivialized the importance of the family and the role women play in it. Miss Rolnick may not believe in the "Judaism that was," which, according to her, "showed few traces that women were part of the Jewish world." But "the Judaism that was" was the one in which women were the conveyors of values from generation to generation—the Judaism of Rachel, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Rebeccah, Sarah, and Hannah; presumably this is of no interest to her because these women were guilty of cooking for the enemy.

Miss Rolnick describes her "symbolic tent" as a "metaphor for [the feminists] having refurbished the House of Israel so that women can feel comfortable in it." Yet I cannot help wondering how inclusive this tent really is when a young woman who dares to ask a question is immediately vilified as "rude." It would appear that it is not women Miss Rolnick wants to make "comfortable," but a specific brand of politics. This is made explicit in her statement that "My remaining Jewish depends on the changes taking place in Judaism led by the women rabbis and scholars." How sad that Judaism should be considered meaningful only to the degree that it approximates today's feminism.

As for Miss Rolnick's claim that "readers would not learn from [my] article that there are many women's seders," she is quite right; my purpose was simply to document the one at my college, and to consider its implications. But I appreciate her informing us that the phenomenon is spreading into the American Jewish community at large. All the more reason for alarm.

I am very grateful for the kind words of Joan Swirsky and B. Daniel Blatt.

Human Rights

To the Editor of Commentary:

Permit me to provide another example of the issues George Weigel dealt with in "Are Human Rights Still Universal?" [February].

Every now and then a report from India in the Western media recalls the continuing discrimination, suffering, and humiliation of the untouchables. Their situation is the closest thing to the now-ended apartheid in South Africa. But in a way it is worse: South Africa posed a problem of political rights and moral equity. In India, untouchables are an article of faith of the majority religion and not susceptible to challenge on the judicial and political levels, as was the case in South Africa.

In South Africa, too, there was room for foreign involvement—room that many human-rights groups and moral and political forces around the world used effectively. Americans were prominent and possibly critically important.

When it comes to India's victims of apartheid, no such urgency, or even interest, is noticeable in America or elsewhere in Western countries with professed human-rights concerns. To ask and try to answer why this is so yields some significant insights into Western moral standards and motivations.

To begin with, account must be taken of the natural link between injustice to blacks by whites in former colonial countries as well as in America, and the plight of blacks in South Africa. Black empathy is self-evident, and white liberal feelings of compassion and justice, in light of guilt over slavery and continuing discrimination, are also easily understandable.

But does this alone explain the virtual absence of Western concern, not to mention activity or militancy, toward India's system of apartheid? Is there not a consistent pattern of motivation when whites are involved in cruelty and injustice, and a much more cavalier attitude when it comes to inequities, persecutions, and mercilessness among nonwhite groups? The same holds true of murderous conflicts among white ethnic or religious groups, as in the former Yugoslavia.

Where are the rallies, the lobbying, the persistent and passionate involvement in India or Bosnia or Sudan? This is true even when the

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extent of the victimization, in terms of dead, wounded, and permanent consignment to poverty is on a larger scale.

To be sure, we are all closest to ourselves. So blacks can be expected to be more deeply involved when other blacks are persecuted or discriminated against. But is there not something morally amiss when their passion spends itself on white-caused injustice, and the rivers of blood in Rwanda or the starving thousands in southern Sudan evoke hardly a word of concern?

And are not whites convinced of the purity of their human-rights motives and their moral faith also guilty of a double standard relating to the need to deal with their guilt feelings? Another way of phrasing the question is whether blacks are not motivated more by their anger about white racism than by the extent of suffering of fellow blacks. And is white concern not grounded in the selfish need for expiation rather than in genuine compassion, measured by objective standards of justice, equity, and the extent of suffering?

Whether in the United Nations, in Washington or London or Paris, or in the Vatican and in churches and synagogues, these questions must be asked, debated and eventually answered if the quest for human rights is to gain fuller meaning.

ROBERT B. GOLDMANN
Washington, D.C.

"Moe"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I thoroughly enjoyed "Moe" [February], Joseph Epstein's tender tale describing the disillusionment of an older man who suffers estrangement from his son and the death of his wife.

Moe Bernstein eventually finds renewal as he establishes a bond with his grandson while teaching him about trying harder, being tougher, and learning how to survive.

I felt a nostalgic twinge also at the mention of the Horwich Jewish Community Center, Devon Avenue, Lincolnwood, Glencoe, Highland Park, West Rogers Park, and St. Francis Hospital as well as the Chicago Cubs, Bears, and Bulls—all landmarks or institutions in my home town.

Congratulations to Mr. Epstein for his heart-warming story.

ELLIOT SCHUBERT
San Diego, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Being a septuagenarian and almost ten years older than the Moe Bernstein of Joseph Epstein's story, I not only appreciated its tragicomic elements, . . . I found myself fully empathizing with the main character. . . . In its depiction of character and its irony, "Moe" is at least as good as some of the best of Bernard Malamud. . . .

For a number of years I have read Joseph Epstein's nonfiction, both in COMMENTARY and the *American Scholar*. This is the first story of his I have read—what a pleasant surprise.

SAM BLUEFARB
Diamond Bar, California

Samuel Lipman

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I must be speaking for many when I lament the death last December of Samuel Lipman. He was conducting piano classes and performing, sometimes together with his wife, Jeanine Dowis, in Aspen, Colorado when I first met him during the 1960's.

While Mr. Lipman became known as an outstanding music critic in your pages, it should also be noted that he acted as the publisher of a magazine, the *New Criterion*, and that he also published a work on Matthew Arnold and several collections of essays. But his activities as a writer should not be allowed to overshadow his gifts in performance, as, for example, when he played Liszt and Rachmaninoff in the Aspen amphitheater.

I well recall his acute critical perceptions in COMMENTARY. He had a special understanding of the changing role of orchestra conductors over the years—from "authoritarian" to "cooperative"—and his comprehension of the Wagner legacy struck me as unparalleled.

Samuel Lipman invariably upheld the highest standards.

DAVID LAWSON
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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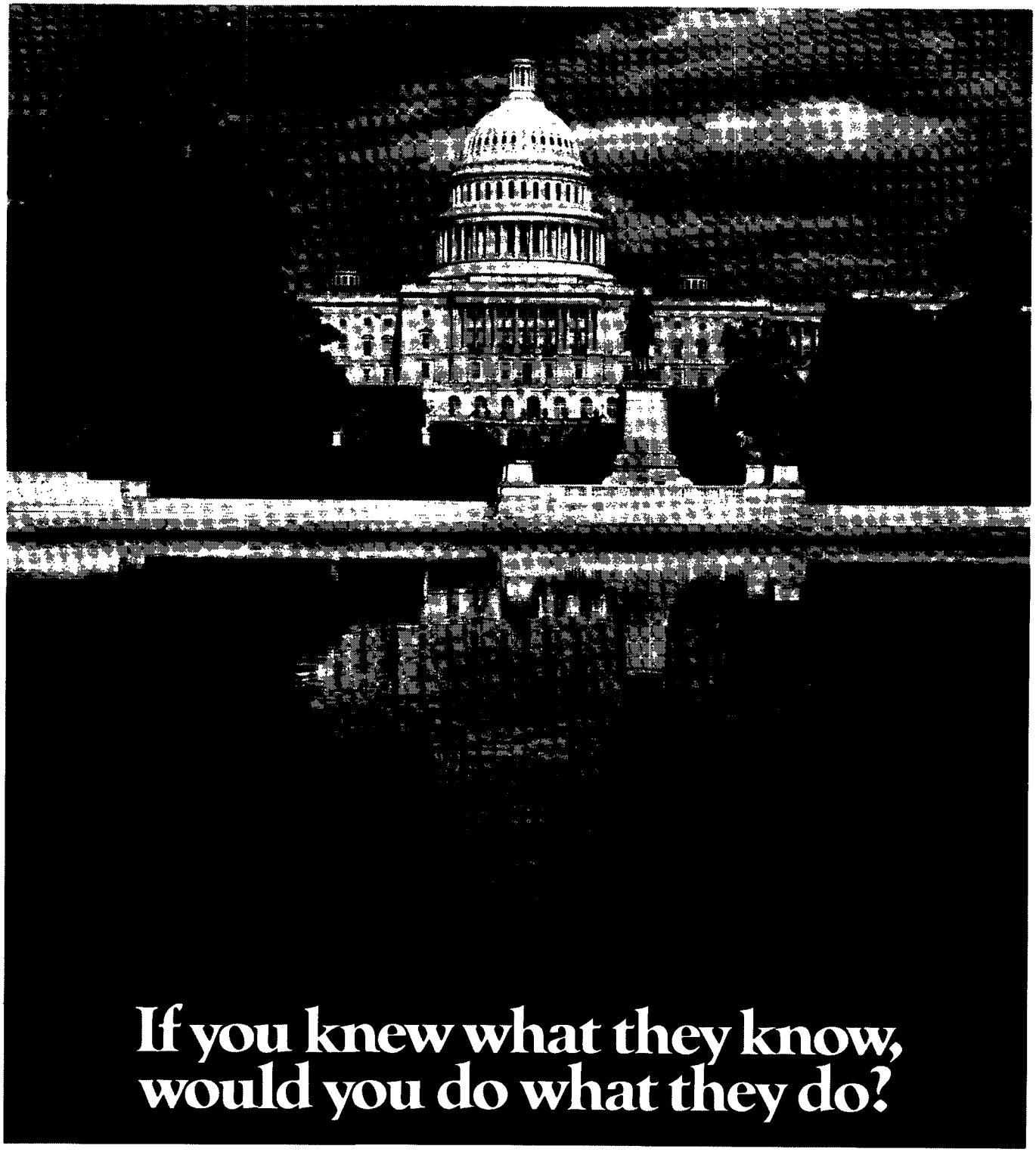

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"The Bell Curve" and Its Critics

Charles Murray

In November 1989, Richard Herrnstein and I agreed to collaborate on a book that, five years later, became *The Bell Curve*. It is a book about events at the two ends of the distribution of intelligence that are profoundly affecting American life. At one extreme, transformations in higher education, occupations, and federal power are creating a cognitive elite of growing wealth and influence. At the other extreme, transformations in occupations and social norms are creating a cognitive underclass. "Pressures from these contrasting movements at the opposite ends of society put terrific stress on the entire structure," we write in the preface, and we spend another 550 pages of main text and 300 pages of supplementary material explaining what we mean, and what we see as the implications for America's future.

The Bell Curve was released by the Free Press early in October 1994, a few weeks after Richard Herrnstein's death. The initial reaction was encouraging. Acting on Herrnstein's suggestion, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) held a small conference of academics and journalists from various points on the political spectrum soon after the book's publication. The conference went well, with brisk exchanges about a book on which people had differing opinions but which they discussed over the course of two days as a serious and careful work of scholarship. Two weeks after the conference, Malcolm Browne's thoughtful review appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, as did Peter Brimelow's long and favorable article in *Forbes*—still the best published synopsis of *The Bell Curve*.

Then came the avalanche. It seems likely that *The Bell Curve* will be one of the most written-about and talked-about works of social science since the Kinsey Report 50 years ago. Most of the comment has been virulently hostile. The book is said to be the flimsiest kind of pseudo-science. Designed to promote a radical political agenda. A racist screed. Methodologically pathetic. Tainted by the work of neo-Nazis.

"Never," my AEI colleague Michael Ledeen observes, "has such a moderate book attracted such an immoderate response." This is the central irony connected with the reaction to *The Bell Curve*. For if any one generalization can be made about a work as long and diverse as *The Bell Curve*, it is that the book is relentlessly moderate—in its language, its claims, its science. It is filled with "on the one hand, . . . on the other hand" discussions of the evidence, presentations of competing explanations, cautions that certain issues are still under debate, and encouragement of other scholars to explore unanswered questions that go beyond the scope of our own work. The statistical analysis is standard and straightforward.

Why then the hysteria? The obvious answer is race, the looming backdrop to all discussion of social policy in the United States. Ever since the first wave of attacks on the book, I have had an image of *The Bell Curve* as a sort of literary Rorschach test. I do not know how to explain the extraordinary discrepancy between what *The Bell Curve* actually says about race and what most commentators have said that the book says, except as the result of some sort of psychological projection onto our text.

Other factors are at work as well. Michael Novak (who has written favorably about *The Bell Curve*) and Thomas Sowell (who has his criticisms of the book) have pointed out in similar terms that the Left has invested everything in a few core beliefs about society as the cause of problems, government as the solution, and the manipulability of the environment for reaching the goal of equality. For the Left, as Novak puts it, *The Bell Curve*'s

> message *cannot* be true, because much more is at stake than a particular set of arguments from psychological science. A this-worldly eschatological *hope* is at stake. The sin attributed to Herrnstein and Murray is theological: they destroy hope.

I am sure Novak and Sowell are on the right track. The underlying reasons for the reaction to *The Bell Curve* will turn out to be significant in their own right, revealing much about the intellectual temper of our era. But perspective on those reasons must wait for some years. Let me make a more limited prediction: when the *Sturm und Drang* has subsided, nothing important in

Charles Murray is the Bradley Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. In addition to *The Bell Curve*, he is the author of *Losing Ground* and *In Pursuit*.

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The Bell Curve will have been overturned. I say this not because Herrnstein and I were especially far-sighted, but because our conclusions are so cautiously phrased and our findings anchored so securely in the middle of the scientific road.

In the meantime I want to present my own assessment of where the debate stands. The problem is how to do it within a reasonable space and how to avoid being overtaken by events. A first wave of reviews and commentaries in the major media appeared between October 1994 and January of this year. A second wave, consisting of reviews in the academic journals, is on the way. I have already seen manuscript copies of some of these reviews, often highly technical, that will be published over the course of the next year.

The volume of all this material reaches many hundreds of pages. To comment in detail on even a single one of the major reviews would require an article the length of this one. I will use this space instead to present a general proposition about *The Bell Curve*, and to illustrate it with examples.

MY PROPOSITION is that the critics of *The Bell Curve* are going to produce the very effects that their attacks have been intended to avert. I am not here referring to the book's popularity with the reading public (it spent fifteen weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list), although it seems true that the descriptions of *The Bell Curve* as an angry, racist polemic have led people in bookstores to pick it up to see what the fuss is about. The pages to which they turn are nothing like what they expect, their curiosity is piqued, and some of them buy it.

But the unintended consequences I have in mind go far beyond the sales that the attacks have stimulated. The attacks are also likely to affect intellectual trends. I foresee a three-stage process.

In the first stage, a critic approaches *The Bell Curve* absolutely certain that it is wrong. He feels no need to be judicious or to explore our evidence in good faith. He seizes upon the arguments that come to hand to make his point and publishes them, with the invective and dismissiveness that seem to be obligatory for a *Bell Curve* critic.

In the second stage, the attack draws other scholars to look at the issue. Many of them share the critic's initial assumption that *The Bell Curve* is wrong. But they nonetheless start to look at evidence they would not have looked at otherwise. They discover that the data are interesting. Some of them back off nervously, but others are curious. They look farther. And it turns out that there is much more out there than Herrnstein and I try to claim.

In stage three, these scholars start to produce new material on the topics that had come under attack in the first place. I doubt that many will choose to defend *The Bell Curve*, but they will build on its foundation and ultimately do far more damage to the critics' "eschatological hope" than *The Bell Curve* itself did.

I will give four examples of these unintended outcomes, drawing from the attacks on the "pseudo-science" of a general-intelligence factor; on the link between genes and race differences in IQ; on the power of the statistical evidence; and on our pessimistic assessment of society's current attempts to raise IQ through outside interventions.

MUCH of the attack on *The Bell Curve*'s science has been mounted not against anything in the book itself but against the psychometric tradition on which it is based. Specifically, Herrnstein and I accept that there is such a thing as a general factor of cognitive ability on which human beings differ: the famous *g*.

Ever since the late 1960's, when IQ became a pariah in the world of ideas, this has been a politically-incorrect position to take. In the early 1980's, a book by Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, cemented the discrediting of *g* among liberals outside the scientific community. His portrait of psychometrics as a pseudo-science pursued by charlatans was swallowed uncritically and enthusiastically by the elite media, as documented by Mark Snyderman and Stanley Rothman in *The IQ Controversy: The Media and Public Policy* (1988).

A central thesis of *The Mismeasure of Man* was that *g* is nothing more than a statistical artifact. Gould based his denial of a general mental factor on a series of claims about factor analysis, the statistical method for identifying *g*.

In a review of *The Bell Curve* in the *New Yorker*, Gould resurrects the same arguments. Echoing *The Mismeasure of Man*, he writes: "*g* cannot have inherent reality . . . for it emerges in one form of mathematical representation for correlations among tests and disappears (or greatly attenuates) in other forms, which are entirely equivalent in amount of information explained." He continues: "The fact that Herrnstein and Murray barely mention the factor-analytic argument forms a central indictment of *The Bell Curve* and is an illustration of its vacuousness." Where, Gould asks, is the evidence that *g* "captures a real property in the head"?

The reason that we "barely mention the factor-analytic argument" against the existence of *g* is that it has little scholarly standing. Gould's statistical indictment of *g* was refuted in various scientific quarters soon after the appearance of *The Mismeasure of Man*, and research into *g* proceeded without a noticeable blip.[1]

[1] For a survey of the contrasting receptions of *The Mismeasure of Man* accorded by the press and by the scientific community, see Bernard Davis's "Neo-Lysenkoism, IQ, and the Press" (*Public Interest*, Fall 1983).

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To see what this particular fight is about, a little background is essential. One of the earliest findings about mental tests was that the results of different tests of apparently different mental skills were positively correlated. Charles Spearman, the British founding father of modern psychometrics, was the first to hypothesize that they were correlated because each was tapping into a common construct—the general mental ability he then labeled *g*. Factor analysis was the method he used to extract this general factor that accounted for the intercorrelations among subtests.

Another pioneering psychometrician, L.L. Thurstone, who in the 1930's became Spearman's great antagonist by demonstrating how factor analysis need not yield a dominant general factor, is the hero of Gould's story. Gould is correct in stating that there are alternative methods with the same overall power to account for the correlations among the tests. But he is wrong when he implies that by using an alternative method, an analyst can get rid of *g*. As Richard Herrnstein liked to say, "You can make *g* hide, but you can't make it go away."[2]

Hence the frustration among psychometricians who have tried to make it go away. After applying the particular factor-analytic method that prevented *g* from emerging, they had nowhere to take the results. If they labeled their independent factors as distinct mental skills and developed a research agenda based on them, they got crushed by critics who could demonstrate that their results were more elegantly explained by *g*. Indeed, *g* not only explained more variance than any other factor, it typically explained three times as much variance as all other factors combined.

But one need not rely only on statistical validation of *g*. By now there is also a growing body of evidence that links *g* (and IQ scores more generally) with neurophysiological functioning.[3] An even larger body of evidence, covered in *The Bell Curve*, demonstrates *g*'s value for predicting academic achievement and job performance.

Gould's position, then, has been thoroughly discredited among scholars, however dominant it remains in the media. Had he kept quiet about *The Bell Curve* or attacked it on other grounds, his view might have continued to hold sway there. But when he repeated the same arguments in his *New Yorker* review—which I am told has been triumphantly circulated by nonpsychologists as the canonical refutation of *The Bell Curve*—he accomplished something that Herrnstein and I could not have done: he made scholars who know what the evidence shows angry enough to go public.

By and large, scholars in the field of intelligence are reclusive—the experiences of people like Arthur Jensen, Hans Eysenck, and Richard Herrnstein himself taught them that the consequences of being visible can be extremely punishing—and many of them were additionally disinclined to jump to the defense of a book coauthored by someone with my reputation as a right-winger. But Gould and, less visibly, his Harvard colleague Howard Gardner in a review of *The Bell Curve* in *American Prospect*, were saying things that were palpably wrong about a topic of deep importance to professionals in the field.

Some of these professionals responded with outraged letters to the *New Yorker* (none was printed). Then came a statement signed by 52 scholars and published in the *Wall Street Journal* in which all the main scientific findings of *The Bell Curve* were endorsed (without any explicit mention of the book or its critics). I also hear second-hand of incidents in which reporters have called scholars about "this pseudo-science *g* business" and received an answer they did not expect. The effects of the backlash are still taking shape, but the media may finally be getting the message. The big unreported story about the study of intelligence in the last decade is the remarkable resilience and importance of *g*.

I come now to the second example of how the attacks on *The Bell Curve* are likely to have unintended consequences: the determination of the critics to focus on race and genes, even though *The Bell Curve* does not.

The Bell Curve draws three important conclusions about intelligence and race: (1) All races are represented across the range of intelligence, from lowest to highest. (2) American blacks and whites continue to have different mean scores on mental tests, with the difference varying from test to test but usually about one standard deviation in magnitude—about fifteen IQ points. "One standard deviation" means roughly that the average black American scores at the sixteenth percentile of the white distribution. (3) Mental-test scores are generally as predictive of academic and job performance for blacks as for other ethnic groups. Insofar as the tests are biased at all, they tend to overpredict, not underpredict, black performance.

These facts are useful in the quest to understand why (for example) occupational and wage differences separate blacks and whites, or why aggressive affirmative action has produced academic apartheid in our universities. More generally, Herrnstein and I write that a broad range of American social issues cannot be interpreted without understanding the ways in which intel-

[2] For those who want to pursue the technical issues, I recommend John B. Carroll's recent book, *Human Cognitive Abilities: A Survey of Factor-Analytic Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). Carroll, former director of the L.L. Thurstone Psychometric Laboratory, points out that Thurstone himself came to accept the notion of a general factor in his later years.

[3] For examples, see A.R. Jensen, "The *g* Beyond Factor Analysis," in R.R. Ronning, J.A. Glover, J.C. Conoley, and J.C. Witt (eds.), *The Influence of Cognitive Psychology on Testing*, or B. Bower, "Images of Intellect: Brain Scans May Colorize Intelligence," *Science News* (October 8, 1994).

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ligence plays a role that is often, and wrongly, conflated with the role of race. When it comes to government policy, there was in our minds just one authentic implication: return as quickly as possible to the cornerstone of the American ideal that people are to be treated as individuals, not as members of groups.

The furor over *The Bell Curve* and race has barely touched on these core points. Instead, the critics have been obsessed—no hyperbole here—with genes, trying to stamp out any consideration of the possibility that race differences have a genetic component.

For the record, what we said about genes, IQ, and race in the book is that a legitimate scientific debate is under way about the relationship of genes to race differences in intelligence; that it is scientifically prudent at this point to assume that both environment and genes are involved, in unknown proportions[4]; and, most importantly, that people are getting far too excited about the whole issue. Genetically-caused differences are not as fearful, nor environmentally-caused differences as benign, as many think. What matters is not the source but the existence of group differences, and their intractability (for whatever reasons).

Six months into my post-*Bell Curve* life, I have concluded that Herrnstein and I were prematurely right on this point. Certainly we were right empirically when we observed that the public at large is fascinated by the possibility of genetic differences, and that the intellectual elites have been "almost hysterically in denial about that possibility," as we put it in the book. I think we were also right in trying to dampen that fascination. But listening to some of my most loyal friends who insist that I *must* be disingenuous when I continue to say that the genetic question is not a big deal, I have to conclude that we failed to make our case persuasively (on pp. 311-15 of *The Bell Curve*).

Yet the critics, in insisting that the issue of genes really *is* a big deal, are once again going to produce the very effect they want to avert. In this instance, they have based their attacks on the premise that a full, fair look at the data will make the issue go away. None appears to have recognized that Herrnstein and I did not make nearly as aggressive a case for genetic differences as the evidence permits.

THE most abundant source of data that we downplayed is in the work of J. Philippe Rushton, a Canadian psychologist who since 1985 has been publishing increasingly detailed material to support his theory that the three races he labels Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid vary not just in intelligence but in a wide variety of characteristics. We put our brief discussion of Rushton in an appendix. The critics of *The Bell Curve* are putting him on the front page, often outrageously caricaturing his work.[5] The trouble with this strategy is that Rushton is a serious scholar who has assembled serious data. The attacks on *The Bell Curve* ensure that those data will get attention.

A related example is the charge that *The Bell Curve* is based on "tainted sources." Charles Lane introduced this theme with an article in the *New Republic* and then a much longer one in the *New York Review of Books*. In the latter piece, he proclaimed that "No fewer than seventeen researchers cited in the bibliography of *The Bell Curve* have contributed to *Mankind Quarterly*, a notorious journal of 'racial history' founded, and funded, by men who believe in the genetic superiority of the white race." Lane also discovered that we cited thirteen scholars who had received grants from the Pioneer Fund, established and run (he alleged) by men who were Nazi sympathizers, eugenicists, and advocates of white racial superiority. Leon Kamin, a vociferous critic of IQ in all its manifestations, took up the same argument at length in his review of *The Bell Curve* in *Scientific American*.

Never mind that *The Bell Curve* draws its evidence from more than 1,000 sources. Never mind that among the scholars in Lane's short list are some of the most respected psychologists of our time, and that the "tainted sources" consist overwhelmingly of articles that were published in respected and refereed journals. Never mind that the relationship between the founder of the Pioneer Fund and today's Pioneer Fund is roughly analogous to the relationship between Henry Ford and today's Ford Foundation. The real effect of Lane and Kamin's work will be to focus academic attention on the main substantive issue they discuss relative to our "tainted sources," African IQ.

The topic of African IQ is a tiny piece of *The Bell Curve*: a three-paragraph section in chapter 13 intended to address a hypothesis Herrnstein and I heard frequently, that the test scores of American blacks have been depressed by the experience of slavery. We briefly summarize the literature indicating that African blacks in fact have lower test scores than American blacks.

Lane and Kamin assault this conclusion ferociously. We make a soft target—since we say so little about African IQ, it is easy for Lane and Kamin to point to the many technical difficulties of knowing exactly what is going on. But in *The Bell Curve* we also omit many more details making a strong case that African blacks have extraordinarily low scores on standardized mental tests, including ones especially designed for illiterate

[4] Intelligence is known to be substantially heritable in human beings as a species, but this does not mean that group differences are also heritable. Despite our explicit treatment of the issue, it is perhaps the single most widespread source of misstatement about *The Bell Curve*.

[5] For Rushton's argument and evidence, see J. Philippe Rushton, *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective* (Transaction Books, 398 pp., $34.95).

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non-Western subjects. Lane and Kamin want this literature to be weak and racist. It is not, and it bears importantly, if inconclusively, on possible racial genetic differences.

When the story of African IQ is eventually untangled, the safest bet is that the roles of nutrition, education, culture, and genes in the development of cognitive functioning will turn out to be complex and intertwined. In other words, I still think Herrnstein and I were right, if prematurely: it is possible to live with the truth about genes and race, whatever it may be, without changing one's mind about how a liberal society should function. But whether we were right or wrong, the violent reaction is making sure that the full range of data will be brought to public attention.

THE third line of attack on *The Bell Curve* that I predict will have an unintended outcome is the attempt to dismiss the statistical power of the book's results.

Perhaps the most important section of *The Bell Curve* is Part II, "Cognitive Classes and Social Behavior." It describes the relationship of IQ to poverty, school-dropout rates, unemployment, divorce, illegitimacy, welfare, parenting, crime, and citizenship. To avoid the complications associated with race, it does all this for a sample of whites, using the National Longitudinal Study of Youth.

The eight chapters in Part II deal with questions like: "What role does IQ play in determining whether a woman has a baby out of wedlock?" Or: "What are the comparative roles of socioeconomic disadvantage and IQ in determining whether a youngster grows up to be poor as an adult?" These are fascinating questions. But you will have a hard time figuring out from the published commentary on *The Bell Curve* that such questions were even asked, let alone what the answers were.

Instead, the main line of attack has been that there is really no need to pay any attention to those chapters, because Herrnstein and Murray confuse correlation with causation; because IQ really does not explain much of the variance anyway; and because the authors' measure of socioeconomic background is in any case deficient. On all three counts, the critics are setting up a reexamination of the existing technical literature on social problems that will be intellectually embarrassing to them in the end.

First, regarding correlation and causation, here, boiled down, is what we say in the introduction to Part II: The nonexperimental social sciences cannot demonstrate unequivocal causality. In trying to explain such things as poverty, illegitimacy, and crime, we will use statistics to show what independent role is left for IQ after taking a person's age, socioeconomic background, and education into account. When there are other obvious explanations—family structure, say—we will take them into account as well. Apart from the statistics, we will describe in common-sense terms what the nature of the causal link might be—why, for example, a poor young woman of low intelligence might be more likely to have a baby out of wedlock than a poor young woman of high intelligence. At the end of this exercise, repeated in similar form for each of the eight chapters in Part II, there will still be unanswered questions, and we will point to many of those unanswered questions ourselves. But the reader will know more than he knew before, and the way will be opened for further explorations by our colleagues.

The statistical method we use throughout is the basic technique for discussing causation in nonexperimental situations: regression analysis, usually with only three independent variables. We interpret the results according to accepted practice. To enable readers to check for themselves, we include the printout of all the results in Appendix 4.

The assault on this modest analysis has been led by Leon Kamin in *Scientific American*. There he argues that the role of IQ cannot be disentangled from socioeconomic background; he suggests that in our database the children of laborers have such uniformly low IQ scores that no one can possibly tell whether the low IQ or the disadvantaged background is to blame for the higher rates of crime, unemployment, and illegitimacy that afflict such youngsters. "The significant question," Kamin writes, "is, why don't the children of laborers acquire the skills that are tapped by IQ tests?"

My answer to his significant question is: "Often, they do acquire such skills," which is what makes the data so interesting. In America, bright children of laborers tend to do quite well in life, despite their humble origins. Conversely, dull children from privileged homes tend to do poorly, despite all the help their parents lavish on them.

Herrnstein and I contend that such patterns point to causation. This is indeed an inference—a sensible inference.

WE APPROACHED the correlation/causation tangle in other sensible ways as well. Consider the vexing case of education. People with high IQ's tend to spend many years in school; people with low IQ's tend to leave. Does the IQ cause the years of education, or the years of education the IQ?

For various technical reasons, simply entering education as an additional independent variable is unwise. So instead we defined two subsamples, each with the same amount of education—one of adults who had completed exactly twelve years of school and obtained a high-school diploma, no more and no less; the other of adults who had completed exactly sixteen years of school and obtained a bachelor's degree, no more and no

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less. For each topic, we accompanied the analysis of the entire sample with separate analyses of the high-school and college samples. Thus the reader could take a look at the independent effect of IQ for people with identical education.

Our procedure has irritated a number of academic critics (notably James Heckman and Arthur Goldberger) who grumble that the state of the art permits much more. Yes, it does, and in the book we say how much we look forward to watching our colleagues apply those more sophisticated techniques to the unanswered questions. But more sophisticated modeling techniques would also have opened a wide variety of technical problems that we wanted to avoid. The procedure we chose gave an excellent means of bounding the independent effects of education, and that was our purpose.

But let us say a critic grants the existence of independent relationships between IQ and social outcomes after holding other plausible causes constant. How *important* are these "independent relationships"? Hardly at all, says Stephen Jay Gould: *The Bell Curve* can safely be dismissed because IQ explains so little about the social outcomes in question—just a few percent of the variance, in the statistician's jargon.

Here is the truth: the relationships between IQ and social behaviors that we present in *The Bell Curve* are not only "significant" in the standard statistical sense of that phrase, they are powerful in a substantive sense, often much more powerful than the relationships linking social behaviors with the usual suspects (education, social status, affluence, ethnicity). In fact, Herrnstein and I actually understate the strength of the statistical record in *The Bell Curve.* The story is complex, but worth recounting because it tells so much about the academic response to *The Bell Curve.*

In ordinary multiple-regression analysis, "independent variables," the hypothesized causes, are related to a "dependent variable," the hypothesized effect. Two statistics are of special interest. The first is the set of regression coefficients, one for each independent variable, which tell you the magnitude of the effect each independent variable has on the dependent variable after taking the role of all the other independent variables into account. Each coefficient has a standard error, which may be used to determine whether the coefficient is statistically significant (i.e., unlikely to have been produced by chance). The second statistic of special interest is the square of the multiple correlation, written as R^2 (pronounced "r square"), that tells you how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by all the independent variables taken together.

One of the early topics about multiple regression that graduate students study is the different uses of regression coefficients and R^2. If you have a coefficient with a large value and small standard error, it is typically the statistic of main interpretive importance, while R^2 is of secondary and sometimes trivial importance. Such is the case with the kind of analysis in *The Bell Curve,* for reasons we explain in Appendix 4.

In all this, we treat our data as our colleagues around the country treat regression results every day. There is nothing controversial here—as evidenced by the fact that none of the quantitative social scientists who reviewed this part of our manuscript before publication raised a question about our methods.

But that is not the end of the story. Herrnstein and I make reference to the R^2s in Appendix 4 as if they represent "explained variance"—and thereby we commit a technical error, falsely *understating* the overall explanatory power of our statistics. In logistic regression analysis—the particular type we use throughout Part II—the statistic labeled R^2 is an ersatz and unsatisfactory attempt to express the model's goodness-of-fit. Most statisticians to whom I have talked since say we should have ignored it altogether. Stephen Jay Gould, and others who are making the same criticism he does, have fallen into the same error.

It would be nice if a few respected professors would publicly point out that, whatever else one might think about *The Bell Curve,* the criticisms of the book's small R^2s are wrong. But this is unlikely to happen. Probably the allegation will quietly fade away, as the academics who know the true story discreetly impart the news to those who do not.

THE unfounded criticisms of the statistics in *The Bell Curve* that I have discussed so far will merely cause embarrassment among a few who both understand the issues and have the decency to be embarrassed. The real potential for backfire in the statistical critique of *The Bell Curve* comes from the attack on our use of socioeconomic status (SES).

Measures of SES are a staple in the social sciences. Leaf through the dozens of technical articles in sociology and economics dealing with issues of success and failure in American life, and you will frequently find a measure of SES as part of the analysis. A major purpose of *The Bell Curve* was to add IQ to SES as an explanatory variable. To avoid controversy, we deliberately constructed an SES index that uses the same elements everybody else uses: income, occupation, and education. We did not have an a-priori reason for weighting any of these more heavily than the others, so we converted them to what are called "standard scores" and added them up to get our index—all of which would ordinarily have caused no comment.

But when it comes to *The Bell Curve,* a standard SES index suddenly becomes problematic. James Heckman notes ominously that we do not have income data for a large part of the sample. Arthur Goldberger looks suspiciously on the idea of standardizing the variables. Leon Kamin hypothesizes that probably the self-reports of income, educa-

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tion, and occupation are exaggerated to a degree that falsely produces the relationships we report.

My response to such criticisms is, fine, let us test out these potential problems. Compare the results for the subsamples with and without income data. Do not standardize the variables; create some other scales and use some other method of combining them. Examine the validity of the self-report data. Examine what happens when the constituent variables are entered separately instead of as an index.

As scholars are supposed to do, Herrnstein and I checked out these and many other possibilities—the results reported in *The Bell Curve* were triangulated in numbing detail over the years we worked on the book—and we knew what the critics who bothered to retrace our steps would discover: that there is no way to construct a measure of socioeconomic background using the accepted constituent variables that makes much difference in the independent role of IQ. In the jargon, our measure of SES is robust, and as valid as everyone else's has been.

But there's the rub: how valid *has* everyone else's been? Until *The Bell Curve* came along, measures of SES similar to ours were used without a second thought. Now, suddenly, they are to be questioned. I doubt whether the profession will be able to confine the questioning to just *The Bell Curve*. What Herrnstein and I have done, in effect, is to throw down a challenge: if you don't like the way IQ dominates this thing we call "socioeconomic status" in producing important social outcomes, come up with another means of measuring the environment that produces results you like better.

Such measures can probably be developed—but they will not be ones that the critics of *The Bell Curve* will like. Suppose, for example, that one can create a good measure of "the degree of presence and competency of a father in the raising of a female child." That might have a large independent effect on the girl's chances of giving birth to a baby out of wedlock, whatever her IQ. Suppose that one can create a good measure of "the degree to which a young male is raised in an environment where high moral standards are enforced consistently and firmly." Again, I can imagine this having a major effect on the likelihood of his becoming a criminal, independently of IQ.

But the same measures that compete with the importance of IQ are going to make starkly clear something that *The Bell Curve* has already suggested: the kinds of economic and social disadvantages that liberals have traditionally treated as decisive are comparatively unimportant. It may sound like an issue that concerns only the social scientists. Far from it. If I were to nominate the biggest sleeper effect to emerge from *The Bell Curve* debate, it would be the collapse of SES as a way of interpreting social problems. The rationale for liberal social policy cannot easily do without it.

RAISING the question of policy brings us to the last of my four examples of the potential backfire effect of attacks on *The Bell Curve*—the malleability of IQ. These attacks focused on Chapter 17, "Raising Cognitive Ability," which chronicles the record of attempts to raise IQ through better nutrition, prenatal care, infant intervention, and preschool and in-school programs. The cries of protest here have been almost as loud as those directed at our chapter on race, and for the reason that Michael Novak identified: by arguing that no easy methods for raising IQ exist, we "destroy hope," or at least the kind of hope that drives many of the educational and preschool interventions for today's disadvantaged youth.

We do express hope, actually. Because the environment plays a significant role (40 percent is our ball-park estimate) in determining intelligence—a point *The Bell Curve* states clearly and often—we say that sooner or later researchers ought to be able to figure out where the levers are. We urge that steps be taken to hasten the day when such knowledge becomes available.

But in examining the *current* state of knowledge, we also urge realism. Speaking of the most popular idea, intensive intervention for preschoolers, we conclude that "we and everyone else are far from knowing whether, let alone how, any of these projects have increased intelligence." We also predict that "many ostensibly successful projects will be cited as plain and indisputable evidence that we are willfully refusing to see the light."

This prediction has been borne out. Thus, the psychologist Richard Nisbett, writing in *The Bell Curve Wars*,[6] a compendium of attacks on our book, accuses us of being "strangely selective" in our reports about the effects of intervention, and wonders if we were "unaware of the very large literature that exists on the topic of early intervention."

The "very large literature" of which we were unaware? The only study Nisbett mentions that we do not is one published in *Pediatrics* in 1992 which he describes as showing a nine-point IQ advantage at age three for participants in the intervention. Nisbett neglects to acknowledge the unreliability of IQ measures at age three. More decisively, Nisbett is apparently unaware that a follow-up of the same project was published in 1994, when the children were, at age five, old enough for IQ scores to begin to become interpretable. The results? The experimental group had an advantage of just 2.5 points on one measure of IQ and two-tenths of a point on another—both differences being substantively trivial and statistically insignificant.[7] In other words, the only study in "the very large literature" that we missed

[6] Edited by Steven Fraser, Basic Books, 216 pp., $10.00 (paperback).

[7] Jeanne Brooks-Gunn *et al.*, "Early Intervention in Low-Birth-Weight Premature Infants," *JAMA*, vol. 272 (1994).

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does not contradict our conclusion that such interventions have provided promising leads but no more.

I will make two broader statements. First, in the critiques to date, no one has pointed to a credible study containing evidence of significant, long-term effects on cognitive functioning that we do not consider in *The Bell Curve*. Second, our account of the record to date is, if anything, generous. The two major intensive interventions for raising the IQ of children at high risk of mental retardation—Project Milwaukee and the Abecedarian Project—have come under intense methodological criticism in the technical literature. We allude to the controversy in the book, but in neither case is the evidence so clear that we could come down hard on the "no-effect" conclusion, and so we do not. If we err, it is in the direction of giving more credit to the interventions than is warranted.

But just as we predicted, many others are nominating "programs that work" that we mysteriously failed to consider. And I am sure that some of them do work, for goals other than raising IQ. We would be the last to suggest that education cannot be made better, or that the socialization of children cannot be improved. But in *The Bell Curve* we talk about a particular goal: improving the cognitive functioning of human beings over the long term. On that score, the record remains as Herrnstein and I describe it: yes, it can be done, but at present only in modest amounts for most children, usually temporarily, and inconsistently.

In this instance, I have reason to hope that the unintended effect of the attacks on *The Bell Curve* will be to crystallize a debate that has long needed crystallizing. The cry that "Herrnstein and Murray are too pessimistic" is going to force a great many claims to be laid on the table for examination. Thus, Howard Gardner's review takes us to task for not citing Lisbeth Schorr's book, *Within Our Reach*. I would be delighted to join in a rigorous examination of the programs Schorr describes, and see whether we find among them hard evidence of long-term improvement in cognitive functioning. Let us bring up all the other nominees for inspection as well. In short, let us use the furor over *The Bell Curve* finally to come to grips with how difficult it is, given the current state of knowledge, for outside interventions to make much difference in the environmental factors that nurture cognitive development.

If outside interventions are not promising, what about the more general phenomenon we label the "Flynn effect" (after the political scientist James Flynn, who has done the most to bring it to public attention), whereby IQ scores have been rising secularly throughout the world since at least the 1930's? As Thomas Sowell has argued in the *American Spectator*, the Flynn effect gives reason to conclude that intelligence is malleable after all. Herrnstein and I allude to that possibility without expressing much optimism about it. Moreover, even if the rise in IQ scores could be taken at face value, we would still not know how to intervene so as to manipulate it. In our view (as in Flynn's), it seems likely that most of the increase in IQ scores over time represents something besides gains in cognitive functioning. But what that something is remains unclear, and this issue is still wide open.

A few weeks after *The Bell Curve* appeared, a reporter remarked to me that the real message of the book is "Get serious." I resisted at first, but I now think he had a point.

We never quite say it in so many words, but the book's subtext is that America's discussion of social policy since the 1960's has been carried on in a never-never land where human beings are easily changed and society can eventually become a Lake Wobegon where everyone is above average. *The Bell Curve* does indeed imply that it is time to get serious about how best to accommodate the huge and often intractable individual differences that shape human society.

This is a counsel not of despair but of realism—including realistic hope. An individual's *g* may not be as elastic as one would prefer, but the inventiveness of the species seems to have few bounds. In *The Bell Curve*, we are matter-of-fact about the limits facing low-IQ individuals in a postindustrial economy, but we also celebrate the capacity of people everywhere in the normal range on the bell curve to live morally autonomous, satisfying lives, if only the system will let them. Accepting the message of *The Bell Curve* does not mean giving up on improving social policy, it means thinking anew about how progress is to be achieved—and even more fundamentally, thinking anew about how "progress" is to be defined.

The verdict on the influence of *The Bell Curve* on policy is many years away. For now, the book may have another useful role to play that we did not anticipate. The attacks on it have often read like an unintentional confirmation of our view of the "cognitive elite" as a new caste, complete with high priests, dogmas, heresies, and apostates. They have revealed the extent to which the social science that deals in public policy has in the latter part of the 20th century become self-censored and riddled with taboos—in a word, corrupt. Only the most profound, anguished, and divisive reexamination can change that situation, and it has to be done within the profession. If *The Bell Curve* achieves nothing else, I will be satisfied if it helps get such a reexamination going.

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A Jewish Contract With America

Jack Wertheimer

NORMALLY, when the representative organizations of a small minority emphatically back public policies that are just as emphatically rejected by the majority of American voters, one might expect at least a modicum of internal soul-searching about the wisdom of the minority's positions—particularly when those positions are only tangentially related to the group's actual interests. Yet any such mood of introspection has been noticeably absent from the organized Jewish community since last November, when a new Republican majority came to power in both houses of Congress on the basis of a Contract With America.

That "contract," among other things, runs counter to the fundamental approaches of Jewish public policy, with its decades-long tradition of endorsing government spending on social problems and its unquestioning faith in the proverbial "wall of separation" between church and state. But instead of pondering the sagacity of a position so out of sync with the mood of the country, the established organizations, after recovering from their stunned disappointment at the election results, have pledged themselves to combat the Contract With America. Remarkably, there seems to have been no debate about whether such an unbending approach is really good for American Jews.

How have things come to such a pass?

TO UNDERSTAND the role played by the established organizations in the formulation of Jewish public policy today, a bit of history is in order. Most of them came into being early in this century as defense agencies, with the explicit mandate of combating anti-Semitism both at home and abroad. First among them was the American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906 by a cadre of "uptown Jews" drawn from the German-Jewish elite of New York, Philadelphia, and other East Coast communities. A few years later, in 1913, leaders of Midwestern and Southern Jewish communities, again mostly of German origin, expressed their independence from New York by founding an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) under the auspices of the Chicago-based B'nai B'rith. Then, during World War I, still a third organization, the American Jewish Congress, was established—this time by the children of East European immigrants who wished to democratize Jewish life.

In time, these organizations broadened their constituencies, and the uptown/downtown rivalries faded. Each carved out a separate niche and developed a different strategy in the battle against anti-Semitism. But that battle, narrowly and exactly conceived, remained their first priority.

In the middle decades of the century, however, and with growing intensity after World War II, each of these groups began to recast its agenda in much broader and more expansive terms. The rise of Nazism abroad, and recrudescence of anti-Semitism at home, seemed to convey a clear lesson: anti-Semitism posed a threat not only to Jews but to the proper functioning of society at large, indeed to democracy itself. Hence, the best strategy for countering anti-Semitism was to cast it in terms of that larger threat. Moreover, since anti-Semitism was intertwined with all prejudice, it became imperative to deal with the social ills which fostered such prejudice.

And so the organizations reconceived their mission. They initiated programs to fight prejudice and discrimination against all groups, especially black Americans; developed legal departments to file briefs articulating their positions on pending court cases; and worked to educate American society about group differences.

A change of name symbolized this turn to a greater universalism: Jewish defense organizations now became known as "human-relations" agencies, and their scope of operation came to be defined as "community relations." Under that rubric, the organizations worked in the immediate postwar years for the passage of civil-rights legislation and for the revision of American immigration laws which set quotas based on national origins. Significantly, both these campaigns were undertaken in alliance with non-Jewish interest groups, respectively the NAACP and the American Immigration and Citizenship Conference.

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And the success of the two campaigns encouraged the agencies to expand their network of coalition partners still further.

Already by 1944 the field had grown sufficiently to warrant the creation of a coordinating body, the National Community Relations Advisory Council, which later added the word "Jewish" to its name and became known by its acronym, NJCRAC. This umbrella council was initially designed to coordinate the efforts of fourteen local and a half-dozen national agencies. Today, 50 years after its founding, NJCRAC has grown to encompass 117 local community councils and 13 national agencies, representing not only the old defense organizations but also representative bodies from the three major religious streams of Judaism, the largest women's organizations—Hadassah, the National Council of Jewish Women, and Women's American ORT—as well as Jewish War Veterans and the Jewish Labor Committee.

Each of these organizations devotes some of its energies and funds to aspects of "community relations," leading to what can easily seem to be a fair amount of duplication and overlap. Indeed, over the years there have been repeated calls for the merger of specific individual agencies. Most recently, at a general assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, Edgar Bronfman, the president of the World Jewish Congress, proposed the merger or elimination of the three national defense agencies that monitor and fight anti-Semitism.

But the fact is that despite areas of overlap, the national agencies *have* developed a division of labor among them, and each specializes in building coalitions with different partners. The American Jewish Congress, for instance, is mainly engaged in legal work, and has earned its reputation as the "Jewish ACLU" by linking the Jewish community with the civil-liberties sector of American society. Both the American Jewish Committee and the ADL are active in interfaith work, but each targets different ethnic populations for cooperative ventures. Thus, the Committee has opened channels of communication in recent years with Asian Americans and Pacific-rim nations. In the struggle against domestic anti-Semitism, the ADL for its part continues to play an important role as a monitor of hate groups that endanger other minorities. Duplicative programs would seem a small price to pay for the links forged by these organizations with non-Jewish groups in the United States and abroad.

Nevertheless, Bronfman was right to focus a spotlight on Jewish organizational life. The community-relations field does warrant close scrutiny—not, however, because of wasteful overlap, but because it is driven by lay and professional leaders whose underlying assumption is that the Jewish community should speak with a single voice on matters of public policy that have little direct bearing on Jewish interests. The effect of this leveling perspective is to convey the impression, wrong but understandable, that what the community-relations field has to say on matters of public policy represents the views of American Jewry as a whole.

AND what does it have to say? Every year since 1953, NJCRAC has issued a Joint Program Plan to codify the consensus positions of its constitutent groups. It is instructive to compare the plan of 1954 with that for 1994-95. Whereas the former stresses basic objectives "that do not change with changing times"—namely, "the protection and enhancement of equal rights and opportunities and the creation of conditions that contribute toward vital Jewish living"—the latter construes its mandate much more broadly. Conditions "conducive to the creative continuity and well-being of the Jewish community," NJCRAC now avers,

> can be achieved only within a social framework committed to democratic pluralism; freedom of religion, thought, expression, and association; the wall of separation between church and state; equal rights; justice and opportunity; and a climate in which differences among groups are accepted and respected, and in which each is free to cultivate its own distinctive values while participating fully in the general life of the society.

What follows from this all-embracing vision is a laundry list of positions espoused by the official Jewish community on a whole slew of American social issues, all ranged on the Left-liberal side of the political spectrum. Here, for example, is a brief sampler of what NJCRAC includes in its 1994-95 "Domestic Agenda": a plan for *national health-care coverage*, more comprehensive than the ill-fated Clinton proposal and including universal access, comprehensive preventive care, choice of services, affordable costs, funds for research, continuing education for providers, and "just compensation for all workers"; a ringing endorsement of *public-school education*, coupled with unwavering opposition to any aid to parochial schools; complete opposition to *capital punishment*; a statement on *AIDS* which instructs the Department of Health and Human Services to remove "the HIV virus from the list of 'dangerous and contagious diseases' for which aliens are excludable from this country"; a strong endorsement of *environmental programs*, including a call for "the elevation of the Environmental Protection Agency to Cabinet status."

Now, whether these policy positions offer the best solutions to contemporary social problems in the United States is itself a debatable proposition. But why, one asks oneself, have they been enunciated *in the name* of the American Jewish community? And why should that community be investing its moral and political capital in sup-

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port of policies that do not affect Jews as a group—and about which American Jews as individual citizens undoubtedly hold a variety of opinions?

As it happens, a number of justifications have been offered over the years for NJCRAC's forays into public policy, and some of them appear in the 1994-95 Joint Program Plan. Perhaps the major one is that the Jewish tradition itself *commands* political activism, and even endorses particular (liberal) policies. In the words of the Joint Program Plan: "American Jewish activism reflects the essence of the Judaic concept of *'mitzvot,'* to act upon commandments."

This, however, only begs the question of which particular commandments of the tradition are to be heeded, and how they are to be translated into a political program—a question brought vividly to the fore last December in, of all places, the *New York Times*. The opening salvo was fired by a new conservative group called "Toward Tradition" which, in a paid advertisement on the *Times* op-ed page, emphatically stated that "Judaism and its eternal values have little in common with modern American liberalism" and called upon American Jews instead to rally to the banner of "freedom, decency, individual responsibility, and *true* compassion." A rejoinder ad was quickly placed by a liberal group, the Ad Hoc Jewish Committee for Social Justice, which reminded readers of Judaism's "core commitment . . . to the pursuit of justice."

Yet even this second ad went on to note, candidly enough, that Jews "don't always agree with each other on how the hungry may best be fed, the naked clothed, social justice achieved." Indeed, it is precisely over the application of general principles of justice and compassion that decent people disagree. Is, for instance, capital punishment (which happens to be *commanded* by the Torah) an act of social justice or of social evil? If we call for strict gun control, are we protecting the innocent or depriving them of the means of defending themselves against criminals (such self-defense being, again, commanded by the Torah)? Liberal activists claim that the American welfare system as presently constituted is perfectly congruent with Jewish teachings of *tzedakah* (justice, charity); but is that so, when the traditionally preferred form of Jewish giving is one that safeguards the dignity of the recipient?

Aware, perhaps, of the dangers of simplification, the NJCRAC Joint Program Plan sidesteps Jewish religious teachings by taking them for granted: "It is *assumed* [emphasis added] that those [to] whom the Plan is principally addressed are fully cognizant of [the] matrices of Jewish thought and actions and are moved by them." But the absence of explicit references to religious traditions undermines the claim that the Plan is in fact grounded in Jewish teachings.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the unqualified endorsement the Plan gives to what it euphemistically refers to as "women's rights . . . to reproductive choice services"—that is, abortion. At a time of raging debate in American society, it is simply staggering that in a major annual statement, the established organizations of the Jewish community should confidently pronounce on court cases, assess legislation, evaluate individual programs, and discuss the pros and cons of health benefits while offering only a glancing reference to abortion as a moral problem. It is all the more staggering in light of the fact that several of NJCRAC's own constituents, including the Women's League for Conservative Judaism as well as Orthodox groups, have forthrightly addressed these agonizing moral issues in their own literature. The evident indifference of the Joint Program Plan to Jewish ethics and Jewish religion alike cannot but lend credence to those who view NJCRAC's positions as a product of no other religion than liberalism.

Another justification for NJCRAC's brand of activism is that it serves the group interests of Jews to encourage those forces in society that are tolerant and socially "conscious." As we have seen, this view is grounded in historical experience: the destruction of European Jewry convinced many that the fate of Jews was directly linked to the welfare of society at large, and necessitated a more cosmopolitan concern for the weak and needy. In recent decades, however, this concern has progressively extended its reach to absurd lengths. By what definition of the Jewish group interest is it desirable for the organized Jewish community to take a stand on specific items of legislation concerning the environment, or to issue a solemn proclamation in favor of elevating an environmental watchdog agency to Cabinet status?

Then there is a third rationale—namely, that most American Jews do, in fact, concur with the public-policy positions taken by NJCRAC. There is some merit to this argument. Surveys consistently find that Jews tend to favor an activist government and liberal positions. Moreover, NJCRAC can accurately claim that its deliberative processes are among the most democratic in Jewish organizational life, with much internal consultation of constituent groups. The Joint Program Plan, according to this argument, reflects the will of American Jews.

In truth, however, matters are more complex. Lay and professional leaders of community-relations agencies are not randomly selected but gravitate to the field because they are social activists; it is difficult to imagine a political conservative, or someone eager to slash spending programs, rising far in a local, let alone a national, community-relations organization. Moreover, consultations within NJCRAC are one-sided: most of its constituent members take no posi-

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tion on a whole range of issues of interest to the leadership, and have neither the personnel nor the engaged interest to judge most items on the Domestic Agenda. Members pick their fights carefully; on matters that do not concern them directly, they tend to defer to the coordinating body.

In recent years, still a fourth rationale has been advanced for NJCRAC's wide-ranging social agenda—namely, that it can provide an avenue for that most highly-prized desideratum, Jewish continuity. According to the Joint Program Plan:

> Special emphasis should be placed on reaching out to the many Jews who are responsive to the social-justice agenda set forth in the . . . Plan but are currently marginal in their involvement in Jewish life. . . . The critical element is to provide the Jewish vehicles through which they can act as Jews.

The Jewish community, it is here being suggested, can help solve its deep problem of internal disaffiliation by recruiting new leaders not from the ranks of the already committed and knowledgeable but from those on the periphery who happen to have the "correct" politics—which is also, by definition, a "Jewish" politics. One hardly knows how to respond to the breathtaking circularity, and the presumptuousness, of this logic.

When all is said and done, though, the most plausible justification for NJCRAC's domestic agenda is none of the above, but rather a frankly political one. This justification, too, makes its appearance in the Joint Program Plan. As a small minority, it is said, the Jewish community must forge links with coalition partners in the hope that these partners will speak out for Jewish interests:

> The multi-issue public-policy agenda of the Jewish community-relations field . . . will lead the community to deepen its involvement in the various coalitions that, like us, address issues of poverty, the urban agenda, and social justice. . . . It will [also] enable us to build networks and allies to advance other aspects of the Jewish public-affairs agenda.

Here, at last, is an honest statement of Jewish political interests. But it is also one which, unlike the others, lends itself to a hard-nosed evaluation. Specifically, we can ask which, if any, of the community's coalition partners have "delivered" in return for Jewish support of *their* agendas. For example, has Jewish cooperation with other minority groups on racial and urban matters been rewarded with a strong effort by these groups to root out anti-Semitism in their own ranks? Have African-American allies of the Jewish community acted to temper the eagerness of campus minority organizations to host African-American hatemongers? Similar questions could be raised regarding the behavior of other coalition partners, such as left-wing groups and liberal Protestant denominations that have little patience with Israel.

There is also a larger question to be asked about the coalition partners chosen by the community-relations field. By tilting so heavily toward liberals, has the community missed an opportunity to forge relationships with conservatives? Take the opening section of an earlier Joint Program Plan (1993-94), which announced with pride:

> Reliable figures show that nearly 85 percent of all Jews who voted in 1992 cast their ballot for the Democratic candidate. Many of the issues on the Clinton administration's agenda have long been advocated by the organized Jewish community. Therefore the organized Jewish community has the responsibility to participate in the effort to enact those parts of the Clinton program that are consistent with its existing policies.

One cannot help wondering: *as a community*, would it not be wise to maintain neutrality as between the two major political parties, except where the immediate interests of Jews are at stake? Is not doing otherwise the height of political folly, tantamount to inviting one of the parties to write off the Jews altogether?

One consequence of being identified so directly with the Democrats is that the organized Jewish community has effectively removed itself from any role in the critical battles now shaping up among Republicans. The GOP contains a right-wing extreme that is isolationist and not afraid to invoke populist bigotry, including anti-Semitism. It also contains internationalists and politicians who seek to rebuild American society through constructive and responsible programs. As the internal factional battle unfolds, the organized Jewish community finds itself on the sidelines, asking its Democratic friends to intervene in the struggle for control of the Republican party.

So far, the community seems oblivious of the price it is paying for its politics. An example is the obsessive campaign to erect an impermeable wall of separation between church and state. For decades, this "separationist faith," as it has been aptly dubbed, has been a cardinal principle of the community-relations field, and it is affirmed once again in the Joint Program Plan:

> The Jewish community always has been profoundly aware that maintaining a firm line of separation between church and state is essential to religious freedom and the religious voluntarism which fosters the creative and distinctive survival of diverse religious groups, such as our own. There always has been an ebb and flow of attempts to breach the wall of separation between church and state in America.

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> Vigorous efforts to protect the principle of church-state separation continue to be vital.

Left unstated in this broad historical generalization are two critically important qualifications. First, once upon a time, and until the postwar era, the Jewish community responded with much greater flexibility to the "ebb and flow" of opinion concerning the proper relation between church and state. As the historian Naomi W. Cohen concludes in her *Jews in Christian America* (1992):

> After the turn of the [20th] century, the customary zeal of the strict separationists was slowly tempered. Graver challenges faced by the rapidly expanding and maturing Jewish community . . . reordered priorities, consumed resources, and generated fear. . . . At the same time Jewish spokesmen were forced to concede that church-state separation was no longer an adequate guarantee of Jewish security. . . .

And yet today, 100 years later, the community-relations field will not relent in its inflexible defense of strict separationism, even though graver challenges face the American Jewish community.

The justification most frequently voiced for this inflexibility is that all the historic achievements of American Jews—economic, social, cultural, and religious—are predicated on strict separationism. As a former president of the American Jewish Congress once put it, the security, confidence, and "at-homeness" of American Jews are all due to the unrelenting fight against government identification with religion. Yet it does not take the eye of a trained historian to notice that across the border in Canada, or across the ocean in Western Europe, Jewish communities have thrived culturally and achieved high levels of social and economic success in environments where church and state are not separated by an unbreachable wall.

The misreading of history and of present-day reality to justify strict separationism is not merely an academic sin; it informs the response of the organized community to church-state issues of our own time. Thus, immediately after last November's elections, when talk began to be heard of a constitutional amendment to permit some form of voluntary school prayer, NJCRAC swiftly issued an "action alert" to rally its constituents. "The organized Jewish community," it warned, "must take the lead in opposing any proposed school-prayer amendment or other legislation mandating organized prayer in school." Around the same time, the Council of Jewish Federations issued its own resolution opposing school prayer.

Only a few lone voices even called for a reconsideration of this matter. One of them belonged to Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, who declared, "We owe it to ourselves to reevaluate the issue." Foxman then promptly fired off a letter to President Clinton opposing a constitutional amendment on school prayer. So much for reevaluation—and so much for the flexibility displayed by earlier leaders of American Jewry.

Blind opposition is one thing, and bad enough; even more worrisome is NJCRAC's call for the organized Jewish community to *lead* the campaign against a constitutional amendment permitting school prayer. Where are the vaunted "coalition partners" of the Jewish community on this issue? Why are *they* not leading the charge? And what price—in, precisely, community relations with other Americans—will American Jews pay for assuming the lead?

To ask such questions today is to invite ridicule. After all, we are told, the great lesson of the Holocaust was that Jews should never ask, as did earlier generations, "*mah yomru ha-goyim,*" what will the Gentiles think? Once again, however, Naomi Cohen hints that matters are more complicated. In the recent past, she writes, Jewish exponents of strict separationism failed to

> consider whether their stand reinforced the pervasive secularism within the Jewish community. Nor did they admit that on [this] issue of secularism, the community stood apart from most Americans, who have continued to identify as believers and churchgoers.

How ironic it is that organizations which began their careers as defense agencies, and then became agencies dedicated to enhancing community relations, should now be committing themselves to policies that seem tailor-made not to decrease but rather to increase the level of tension between Jews and other Americans.

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Whose History? Whose Standards?

Walter A. McDougall

THE National Standards Project, conceived under George Bush, born and reared by Bill Clinton's *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, and nursed with $2.2 million from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Department of Education, took sick the moment November's election returns were in. Conservative critics had claimed that the Standards*—two volumes of outlines and study guides for the teaching of, respectively, world and U.S. history in grades 5 through 12—were an abomination designed to indoctrinate young people in anti-Americanism. Riding this wave, Senators Robert Dole (R., Kans.) and Slade Gordon (R., Wash.) now introduced amendments that would have forbidden the use of federal funds for implementation of these Standards, and required that any future recipients of such funds "have a decent respect for United States history's roots in Western civilization."

In the event, the Senate settled on a resolution, rather than a law, condemning the Standards. It passed on January 18 by a vote of 99-1, the lone dissenter, Bennett Johnson (D., La.), holding out for tougher action.

Does this mean that the Standards are dead? As a federal guide to state school boards, perhaps. But the fact remains that the Standards reflect a consensus of the historical profession on what and how children should be taught. Indeed, they reflect what our children are *already* taught in schools across the country, and are sure to influence future authors of textbooks as well. If liberal academics suffer at all from this affair, it will not result from the Senate's wet blanket, but from their own triumphalism in publicizing what had heretofore been a quiet conquest of America's schoolrooms.

AMONG critics of the Standards, Lynne Cheney, former head of the NEH and thus the person who, ironically enough, had assigned management of the project to UCLA's National Center for History in Schools, fired the first shot in this latest battle of the culture wars. Imagine, she wrote last October in the *Wall Street Journal*, an outline of history that pays more attention to the founding of the Sierra Club than to George Washington. Or that invites students to celebrate the "grandeur" of Mansa Musa's West African kingdom while focusing its discussion of Europe on persecution, imperialism, and the slave trade. Or that makes seventeen references to the Ku Klux Klan but only one to Ulysses S. Grant, the man who saved the Union, and none to Thomas Edison, who changed the fundamental relationship between man and nature. In Cheney's view, the Standards "save their unqualified admiration for people, places, and events that are politically correct"; she judges that the project went off the rails because revisionist historians took heart from the 1992 election of Bill Clinton and "iced out" those with more traditional views.

Following Cheney, columnists like Charles Krauthammer, Patrick J. Buchanan, and John Leo, and historians like John P. Diggins and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, complained that the Standards denigrate Western civilization and always depict non-Western ones in a favorable light. They adduced more examples: the Standards invite students to appreciate Aztec "architecture, skills, labor system, and agriculture," but ignore the Aztec religion of human sacrifice; depict Genghis Khan through the eyes of a papal legate whose cultural biases pupils are told to discern; ask students to indict John D. Rockefeller; assess Ronald Reagan as "an agent of selfishness"; and contrast the ecological virtue of Native American culture with our rapacious industrialism.

For their part, defenders of the Standards accused conservatives of forming an opinion on the basis of a few "howlers" so often repeated that one had reason to ask whether the critics had really read the volumes. "Even a cursory look," wrote Jon Wiener (a contributing editor of the *Nation*), "suggests that the assault by Cheney and Co. was flawed." Wiener saw no "preferential treatment of women and minorities." Perhaps

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* National Center for History in the Schools, *National Standards for World History: Exploring Paths to the Present* and *National Standards of United States History: Exploring the American Experience*, Charlotte Crabtree and Gary B. Nash, project co-directors (University of California at Los Angeles, 1994).

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Washington's and Edison's names do not appear where one might expect, but students could hardly avoid them while doing assignments on the American Revolution and great inventors. In any case, counting references proves nothing, since the *most* mentioned name turns out to be Richard Nixon's. (One need not wonder why.)

William H. McNeill, a revered dean of world historians, denied "anti-Western bias," and insisted that our children need to know about our "global past" and the "variety of peoples and groups that played a part in the development of the U.S." Finally, the *New York Times* accused critics of misrepresentation: "Liberal bias creeps into, perhaps, a couple dozen of the 2,600 sample lessons."

How can a responsible citizen judge this artillery duel? One way is simply to take the word of the columnist whose politics most resemble one's own, but to do so means simply reinforcing one's prejudices. The opposite response is to say, in effect, "a pox on both your houses." After all, history has no epistemology comparable to the natural sciences; it is a function of selection and viewpoint, and hence can never be wholly objective. Moreover, each generation rewrites history according to new information, methodologies, and its own search for a "usable past." So why not declare, with Tolstoy, that history is "a collection of fables," or with Mark Twain that it is just "fluid prejudice"?

Why not? Because cynicism, unfortunately, is a sure-fire sign that a nation is losing the will to sustain itself. A people's history is the record of its hopes and travails, birthright and education, follies and wisdom, and all else that binds it together. A nation grown cynical about its own history soon ceases to be a nation at all.

No, the only way to form a discriminating opinion of the Standards is to study them *in toto*, trying to come to grips with not only the political but perhaps especially the educational issues involved. That is what I did, and my report follows.

THE two books of Standards begin with almost identical chapters describing the purpose of the overall project. On the first page a tension erupts between two italicized reasons why history matters: first, because *"Knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence"*; second, because *"History is the only laboratory we have in which to test the consequences of thought."*

The first formula, though undeniable, is almost an invitation to teachers to abuse classroom instruction as a ploy to help children make "intelligent" political choices. The second formula is a corrective, inasmuch as the consequences of ideas have so often been terrible. The test of the Standards is thus whether a healthy tension is maintained between the two formulas, or whether in fact the lessons are long on "presentist" allusions and short on the perils of ideology. We shall see.

The introduction also describes the skills that students ought to acquire. Historical memory is labeled the key to our connectedness with all humankind. (Yes, "mankind" has been purged from the language.) History should teach us to see matters through others' eyes, without requiring that we approve or forgive. Standards should be demanding, and promote active questioning rather than passive absorption. Standards should be applied to *all* students equally; no "dumbed-down" curricula that deny equal opportunity to large numbers of children. Standards should be rooted in chronology and teach students to apprehend patterns and cause-and-effect relationships. Standards should strike a balance between broad themes and specific events. Standards should impart the values of rigorous scholarship such as evaluation of evidence, logical argument, interpretive balance, comparative analysis, comprehension, and "issues-analysis and decision-making." Finally, students should apply these "thinking skills" to their own lives in order "to detect bias, to weigh evidence, and to evaluate argument, thus preparing them to make sensible, independent judgments, to sniff out spurious appeals to history by partisan pleaders, and to distinguish between anecdote and analysis."

Who could not applaud a school that trains children—*all* children—in all these ways? But what are the chances any school could do so? Consider asking high-school students, not only to read their homework assignment with a modicum of understanding but then to do the following with it:

- Identify the source of a historical document and assess its credibility.
- Contrast the differing values, behaviors, and institutions involved.
- Differentiate between historical facts and interpretations.
- Consider multiple perspectives of various people.
- Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causes.
- Challenge arguments of historical inevitability.
- Compare competing historical narratives.
- Hold interpretations of history as tentative.
- Evaluate major debates among historians.
- Hypothesize the influence of the past [*sic*].

This splendid instructional guide for a Ph.D. thesis defense is what the Standards aim to require of all 5th to 12th graders, including those we used to regard as in need of remedial help or as underprivileged. In practice, this curriculum would overtax the capabilities of most *teachers*, not to mention pupils, with the result that 90 percent of the students would flunk, or else (more likely) 100 percent would pass, under the "Wizard of Oz" syndrome. ("You're just as smart as anyone else," the Wizard said to the Scarecrow. "The only thing you don't have is a degree.")

Diane Ravitch has argued that the notion of

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Standards does not mean "dragging down the students at the top, but expecting more of all students, especially those who are in the bottom half." It seems to me more plausible that the equality plank is meant to abolish "elitist" segregation of advanced students from those who are variously "challenged," thereby raising the self-esteem of the latter. Indeed, the theory that history should nurture self-esteem among women and minorities informs the Standards throughout, and is another source of tension.

In the World Standards history is divided into eight eras, the first of which covers pre-history up to 4000 B.C.E., the second up to 1000 B.C.E., the third up to 300 C.E., the fourth up to 1000, the fifth up to 1500, the sixth 1450 to 1770, the seventh up to 1914, and the last the 20th century.

Each era contains a certain number of Standards, and each Standard is elaborated, in turn, in subheads describing subjects to be covered. Finally, each list of subheads is followed by study lessons deemed suitable for grades 5-6, 7-8, or 9-12. The lessons number well over a thousand—one measure of their radical inclusiveness.

Few would dispute that American students today need to learn about other cultures. Historians like McNeill were arguing the case for world history long before "multiculturalism" came along. Accordingly, the Standards' general guidelines mandate that courses "should treat the history and values of diverse civilizations, including those of the West, and should especially address the interactions among them." But inasmuch as the Standards assume that world history will take the place of the old "Plato to NATO" Western Civ course, it is legitimate to ask, as the critics do, whether the Standards "privilege" *non*-Western histories, thereby reversing rather than redeeming the wrong.

As I worked my way through the eight eras, I did get an impression that the West was slighted. So I made a tally of the 109 sub-standards, dividing them into columns labeled "Western," "Non-Western," and "Interactive" (which usually entailed relations between "the West and the rest"). I counted the ancient Mediterranean as Western, pre-Columbian America as non-Western and post-Columbian as Western except when Latin America was lumped with the third world. The rest of the rubrics lent themselves to easy triage.

The results surprised me. Western history won out over non-Western by a margin of 43 percent to 35 percent, with Interactive garnering 23 percent. If we award the West a 40-percent share of the Interactive sections, the overall balance is almost 50-50; that is, half the material covers what we think of as Western Civ, and half the rest of the world put together. If, in practice, students are obliged to take only one year-long course in world history, *every* culture would be slighted. But if students spend four or more semesters on world history, as the Standards recommend, then the 50-50 division is commendable. It all depends on what is taught about the civilizations and the interactions among them.

One more introductory note. A peculiar feature of the World Standards is the labeling of substandards as either Core or Related. On first thought, this technique seems a useful aide for teachers deciding what to stress during precious class time. But on second thought, the curriculum is so all-encompassing that most teachers will probably not pay any attention to Related subjects; they will just toss them out with a sigh of relief. And that means genuine loss in the few cases when seemingly indispensable subjects are inexplicably stamped Related.

One such case appears in the Standard on Ancient Greece. Athenian democracy (and its "limitations") are Core. So, too, is the expansion of Hellenic culture by Alexander the Great. But the "major cultural achievements of Greek civilization" and the Greek wars with the Persian empire are merely Related. Thus, students learn (1) that Athenian democracy was flawed (by slavery, class oppression, and patriarchy), and (2) that otherwise Greek civilization is notable only for the militarism that coopted it and set off to rule the world. Is this meant to serve as a "distant mirror" of American history? Perhaps not consciously. But the authors do consciously render as optional all of Greek art, science, and philosophy, the spread of which is why Alexander was important in the first place, as well as the moving tale of Thermopylae, when the West first united to defend itself against an Eastern tyranny—not to mention the birth of history itself in the works of Thucydides and Herodotus.

My suspicion is that the project directors invented the category of Related in order to ease compromise among committee members pressing their own specialties and those determined to keep the Standards manageable. "OK, OK," says the weary chairman, "the 'influence of the T'ang Dynasty on Southeast Asia' is in, but only if it's Related. . . ." At which point the China scholar barks, "Do you have any idea how crucial the T'ang is to Asian history? Besides, Europe got three Cores and no Relateds last time. If you're going to call the T'ang Related, then make early medieval Europe Related, too." And so it is.

A second potential source of distortion is the Standards' determination to give all cultures equal time. Thus, while the overall balance is defensible, some particular equations seem absurd. Standard #3 in Era 3, for example, covers the rise of major religions *and* empires in Eurasia from 500 B.C.E. to 300 C.E. Does this mean what it says? Are the Roman empire and the first Chinese and Indian dynasties lumped together in a single Standard with the origins of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism? Yes! In the meantime, Standard #4 is wholly

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devoted to "the achievements of Olmec civilization," a *Core* subject. Such "symmetrical asymmetries" permeate the major standards.

One surprising slight is the deemphasis on the history of ideas. This may not have been deliberate; it may be another perverse side effect of inclusiveness. If everyone is to be covered, then everything *about* everyone cannot be. But to omit huge chunks of philosophy, science, and art not only contradicts the stance against "dumbed-down" curricula, it renders incomprehensible other broad swaths of history. For instance, the standard for 19th-century Europe covers nationalism and social movements but labels "technological, scientific, and intellectual achievements" Related. Ditto for "new departures in science and the arts . . . between 1900 and 1940." It would seem that the authors do not deem the revolutions in power and work wrought by thermodynamics, chemicals, electricity, internal combustion, modern medicine, and nuclear physics to be central to the task of teaching what the 20th-century experience is all about.

What is more, a student restricted to Core standards might well escape high school without ever being exposed to the ideas of Mill, Marx (he appears once, so do not play hooky that day), Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, and Einstein. Nor do any of the study plans appear to explain the origins and nature of ideology. How then can students comprehend the relativism and totalitarianism that are defining features of "modern times"? How, indeed, can they "test the consequences of thought," as the Standards' introduction promises they will?

According to the *Times*, the real "treasures" are found not in the outline of history but "among the 2,600 assignments that accompany the standards." In fact, many of these "examples of student achievement" are pedagogically silly, whatever their ideological slant. No "treasures" are buried among the assignments designed to make the classroom "crackle" with mock trials, debates, and play-acting. Such ploys are artificial, time-consuming, and often boring to students not directly involved. Moreover, no one but an expert could "recreate a *tertulia*, or social gathering, held by women leaders such as Maria Josefa Ortiz" without the script being written for him.

Nor are "treasures" found among assignments that are impossibly difficult for most high-schoolers ("Research the core and periphery thesis of Immanuel Wallerstein"), impossibly time-consuming ("Using books like *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, assess the accuracy of such literary accounts in describing the French Revolution"), or simply impossible ("Write a dialogue between a Muslim and a Hindu on what they see as the reasons for the spread of Christian missions, what the impact will be on their faiths, and how best to resist the appeals of Christian missionaries"). Crackle, snore, or make things up?

One common criticism of the assignments is that they always look at events from the point of view of the downtrodden and their self-appointed spokesmen. The truth is more subtle than that.

Some sections in which one would expect to encounter a "devil theory" (e.g., 19th-century European imperialism) are in fact circumspect. Some are bizarre: of the twenty assignments on World War II, five address the Holocaust, three address children; three more address children *in* the Holocaust, and four raise moral objections to *Allied* bombing. Others are skewed: enslavement of Africans and slave revolts are mentioned repeatedly, always in Core Standards (the Haitian rebellion appears in three separate contexts), but the American abolitionist movement is Related and slavery in other cultures is not mentioned at all. Still other lessons are deafening in their silence: China's Taiping rebellion—a slaughter on the scale of World War I—is discussed only in terms of "rural poverty," and Communist Chinese purges and famines—slaughter on the scale of World War II—are ignored with the exception of one 8th-grade assignment inquiring after the results of the Cultural Revolution.

So it is true that non-Western cultures are given a moral pass, but with one exception: their treatment of women. If any consistent ideological thread runs through the world Standards, it is feminism. Over and over again, whether the subject is ancient Rome, Christian Europe, the Islamic world, China (footbinding gets repeated coverage), India, or Mesoamerica, students are prompted to ask "what obstacles [women] faced," "what opportunities were open to them," "what life choices were available," and "in what ways were women subordinate"?

Nowadays few would argue against the inclusion of hefty doses of women's history so long as the subject is not a fig leaf for ahistorical ideology. But who can doubt that boys and girls are expected to conclude from the above questions that: women have always and everywhere been suppressed; they undoubtedly hated their lot; and the cause of this universal phenomenon was . . . what? Ah, there is the crux of the matter. Was it due to the physical exigencies of child-bearing, or the economic exigencies of child-rearing, in pre-industrial societies? Or because a sexual division of labor was taken for granted by most women as well as men? No; the promptings invariably invite students to conclude (or be told) that sexual roles were always a function of patriarchy backed by theology.

Which brings us to religion, another hot button. Perhaps to avoid the risk of offending Bible Belt school districts, the authors do not hold up Christianity for explicit assault, nor do they ridicule other world religions (except in regard to

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their dogma on women). But close reading reveals some interesting tendencies. Judaism is reduced repeatedly to "ethical monotheism"; the prophets and messianic promise are absent, and Moses is not mentioned by name until a query concerning his place in the Qu'ran. The teachings of Jesus and Paul are likewise described in ethical terms and compared to Buddhism. The Gospel is absent. The defining debate over Iconoclasm in Byzantine history is absent. The role of Benedictine monasteries in the founding of European civilization is Related (so the "Dark Ages" are condemned to remain dark). The Crusades are treated at length, but not as the belated Christian *counter*offensive they were. The Reformation lessons contain *one* question on the theology of Luther and Calvin. And although Jews appear in various contexts, Judaism as a historical force disappears.

So religion is treated as ethics—ethics betrayed, moreover, as soon as believers attribute them to a transcendental source. It should therefore come as no surprise that the finale—the last assignment in the entire World Standards—asks pupils to "define 'liberation theology' and explain the ideological conflicts surrounding the philosophy." The true "end of history": liberation theology! Or is it not a theology but an ideology? Or a philosophy? The confusion about what distinguishes these three categories may be the authors' most chilling shortcoming of all.

In short, the World Standards are pretty much what one would expect from a committee. For all their balance between West and non-West, and their laudable stress on cultural interaction, they are too inclusive, difficult, tendentious, or ahistorical. A brilliant, tireless teacher *might* walk an elite class through this material in two or three years. Even then, I doubt whether students could explain why Western civilization became the only universal one; why science, technology, freedom—and prosperity beyond the dreams of Kublai Khan—arose in the West, and not elsewhere; why at length the West fell into a long civil war, and why the totalitarians lost.

Am I then suggesting that students should be taught to honor Western civilization, despite its history of wars and oppression, and despite the contributions of other cultures? I am. The decency of life in the next generation may depend on it.

In the context of American history, the functional equivalent of multiculturalism is "diversity." According to their critics, the authors of the U.S. Standards were so determined to celebrate diversity that they ended up, in Diane Ravitch's words, "accentuating '*pluribus*' while downplaying '*unum*.'" The alleged result is a curriculum that goes out of its way to mention the struggles of "marginalized" groups at the expense of what used to be thought the central narrative of American history.

To be sure, the Standards' criteria themselves mention the importance of commonalities, but only as an afterthought: "Standards for United States history should reflect both the nation's diversity exemplified by race, ethnicity, social and economic status, gender, region, politics, and religion, and the nation's commonalities." The last include "our common civic identity and shared civic values," "democratic political system," and the (question-begging) "struggle to narrow the gap between [our] ideals and practices." Nowhere do the Standards suggest that conflict between equality and liberty is the defining fact of American history.

Having read the criticisms, I expected the authors to give short shrift to politics in favor of social and cultural history. So I did another content analysis. To begin with, the U.S. Standards divide our national story into ten eras with the breaks coming at 1620 (arrival of the Pilgrims); 1763 (end of the French and Indian Wars); 1801 (end of the Federalist period); 1861 (Civil War); 1877 (end of Reconstruction); 1900 (U.S. emergence as world power); 1930 (onset of the Depression); 1945 (end of World War II); and 1968. These watersheds conform to traditional periodization, and the temporal coverage (with its halfway point at 1877) is also conventional. Each era is then defined by standards (two to four, in the U.S. case) and sub-standards listing the topics students are expected to master.

I totaled the 91 sub-standards according to both field (political, social, economic, etc.) and "group focus" (women, Native Americans, white males, etc.), splitting some standards in half when they focused on two groups or relations between them. It turns out that nearly 60 percent of the sub-standards cover politics and foreign policy, and traditional material, all told, comprises about 65 percent of the book. Not bad.

But let us turn the equation around: is not 35 percent a generous portion to attribute to the implicitly "unique" experiences of women and minorities, especially when virtually *zero* space is devoted to the unique experiences of Irish, Germans, Italians, or Jews? My own sense is that, while "race, class, and gender" are probably overrepresented, the basic political narrative is still there. So the question hinges again on what "spin" it is given.

The spin is spun on the first page of the first standard, when 5th and 6th graders are asked to compare Native American ideas on "how the land should be used" with those of Europeans. In the 7th and 8th grades, students ask whether Native American societies were "primitive" at all, or whether they had not in fact "developed complex patterns of social organization, trading networks, and political culture"? The true answer to this false dichotomy is: yes, the Amerindian tribes had social conventions, trade, and politics—what human beings do not?—but, yes, they were primitive and certainly just as capable of aggression

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toward aliens (and one another) as any other race. But that is not the answer suggested for Native Americans, or for West Africans, who are likewise celebrated for their high culture and "attitudes toward nature and the use of the land."

Enter Columbus. Now, Spanish and English practices toward Amerindians and Africans are ugly pages of history that need to be read. But they need to be read *as history*, which is to say that students need to enter the heads of the historical actors. Imagine you were a 16th-century Spaniard who happened upon an Aztec temple bristling with horrific idols and priests carving out the living hearts of men. Would you have any doubt that you had stumbled on to Satan's own kingdom? Can you imagine the carnage if the *Aztecs* had managed to equip themselves with galleons and guns and sailed off to Portugal or West Africa? That Europeans were greedy hypocrites goes without saying. The crime against history is for the authors to pretend that non-Western cultures were somehow pristine.

Why the pretense? The answer appears explicitly in the introduction to Era 2: while learning about European decimation of Native Americans and enslavement of Africans, "students should also recognize that Africans and Native Americans were not simply victims, but were intricately involved in the creation of colonial society and a new, hybrid American culture." In other words, the spin is there to raise the self-esteem of minority students: yes, you are victims, but you also have great value. And to raise the consciousness of white students: you owe much, in both senses of the word, to people of color.

The historiography of self-esteem also demands a pecking order. I was surprised at first that the Standards follow their indictment of the Spaniards with assignments questioning England's "black legend" about the evils of Catholic Spain. Then I understood: Hispanics, too, are victims, so long as their accusers are Wasps.

THE Standards on the American Revolution have been the subject of particular acrimony. One accusation—that they do not pay attention to the colonists' struggle to "bring forth a new nation"—is not borne out. There is plenty of material on the Revolutionary War and Constitution. What strikes me as idiosyncratic is how *Tory* it is. Students are repeatedly asked whether the English Parliament's position on taxation was not in fact reasonable, whether the colonies' resistance was really justified, how a Loyalist would have viewed the Intolerable Acts, whether a break with England was inevitable.

A conspiracy theorist might see here a bias against liberty. But the real flaw in the treatment is, once again, ahistoricity. Thus, four of the five sub-standards covering the Revolution's effects deal with the contributions and frustrations of slaves, Native Americans, and women. As the introduction explains, the Revolution "called into question long-established social and political relationships—between master and slave, man and woman, upper class and lower class, officeholder and constituent, and even parent and child [*sic*]—and thus demarcated an agenda for reform that would preoccupy Americans down to the present day." And so, "students need to confront the central issue of how revolutionary the Revolution actually was."

Well, how revolutionary was it? To be sure, women in revolutionary America were not given the vote. But in how many countries could *anyone* vote in 1776 or, for that matter, 1876? The slaves were not freed. But where else in the world did anguished debate over slavery occur at that time? The authors seem surprised by all that was commonplace, and take for granted all that was rare. So they ask students to seek explanations for the wrong data. It should not be surprising that 18th-century Virginia planters owned slaves. What is striking is the fact that these rustic colonials wrote the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and *The Federalist Papers*, and made advances in self-government and human dignity that amazed and shook the Atlantic world.

Finally, what "agenda" was it that the Standards say was "demarcated," and by whom? The nature of the "agenda" is no mystery, because it reappears in every later era. For the 1801-61 Era, the leitmotif is a quotation from Emerson: "What is man born for but to be a reformer" (as if no "reform" could possibly have negative consequences). Students are told to discover the "predecessors of social movements—such as the civil-rights movement and feminism"—in the "attempts to complete unfinished agendas of the revolutionary period." The introduction to the Civil War warns against placing "[t]oo much stress on the unfinished agenda. . . ." The one for the early 20th century instructs students to be "fascinated with the women's struggle for equality. . . ." The introduction to Era 8 concedes that "World War II deserves careful attention as well" because it "ushered in social changes that established reform agendas that would occupy the United States for the remainder of the 20th century." The introduction to Era 9 instructs teachers that post-World War II history "will take on deeper meaning when connected to the advent of the civil-rights and feminist movements that would become an essential part of the third great reform impulse in American history." Finally, the introduction to Era 10 "claims precedence" for the "reopening of the nation's gates to immigrants" and the "struggle to carry out environmental, feminist, and civil-rights agendas."

Not suprisingly, given this abiding *agenda*, the "last word" in the U.S. Standards is this: "Evaluate the effect of women's participation in sports on gender roles and career choices." Women's athletics: the real "end of history"?

If, then, the U.S. Standards are not grossly imbalanced in terms of coverage, they do explain

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the "deeper meaning" of American history in terms of minority and female struggle versus white male resistance. This is the *gnosis* a pupil must grasp to get good marks. If Europeans braved the unknown to discover a new world, it was to kill and oppress. If colonists carved a new nation out of the woods, it was to displace Native Americans and impose private property. If the "Founding Fathers" (the term has been banished) invoked human rights, it was to deny them to others. If businessmen built the most prosperous nation in history, it was to rape the environment and keep workers in misery.

Nowhere is it suggested that when aggrieved minorities have demanded justice, they have appealed to the very principles bequeathed by our nation's architects (not to mention "The Great Architect of the Universe"). Nowhere is it suggested that women and minorities have striven not to overthrow what white men had built, but to share more abundantly in it. Nor is it mentioned that most women, most of the time, have identified with their fathers or husbands as farmers, clerks, or laborers, Democrats or Republicans, Southerners, Northerners, or Westerners, Protestants, Catholics, or Jews.

In most lessons women are just women, blacks are just blacks. Only once does an apparent reference to men as just men appear, in a question imagining the damage done to workers' self-esteem by unemployment during the Depression. But even then the gender-neutral term "heads of households" is substituted. Apparently there were no *men* in America's past. So who was oppressing women all those years?

I was especially skittish when I read the sections on foreign policy, expecting a neo-Marxist critique of American imperialism. In fact, the treatment of 19th-century diplomacy—the tale of Manifest Destiny—is instructive and balanced. The Standards even pass up the chance to ridicule the War of 1812, one of the sillier episodes in American history, and they present a balanced portrait of the origins of the Mexican War. The section on the Spanish American War says too little about its roots in the Cuban revolt, but exposes students to a range of opinions on the U.S. colonial episode.

How strange, then, that a negative spin enters the text with Woodrow Wilson! First, students are invited to conclude that American neutrality was a sham. Then students are asked to explain why Americans dedicated to "'making the world safe for democracy' denied it to many of their citizens at home, actively prosecuted dissenters, and violated the civil liberties of nonconformists. . . ." Finally, Wilson's Fourteen Points are introduced for the purpose of asking whether he lived up to them when he intervened in Russia, whether Germany was cheated when it agreed to an armistice on the basis of them, and whether they contributed to the failure of the Treaty of Versailles.

These are all legitimate issues. But they betray an ahistorical double standard that judges American *motives* by the most saintly ideals, while excusing or ignoring other nations' *deeds* on the grounds of necessity or differing values. Setting aside the question of accuracy, is it wise to teach grade-schoolers that Wilson was foolish or hypocritical to proclaim democracy, disarmament, self-determination, free trade, and a League of Nations to a war-ravaged world? Maybe the authors are just too eager to teach subtleties better saved for college. Or maybe they mean to answer Yes, lest a new generation be seduced by patriotic rhetoric into new Vietnam-style crusades.

It gets much worse. The 7th- and 8th-grade Standards for World War II say *nothing* about the nature or ideologies of the fascist regimes, but do ask students to assess American blame for going isolationist, and to consider the causes of American tension with Japan dating back to 1900. Thus prepared, 9th to 12th graders will have no trouble answering, "Why did Japan set up the Co-Prosperity Sphere?" and whether the U.S. oil embargo was "an act of war" precipitating Pearl Harbor.

The four high-school lessons on the conduct of the war cover (1) the Anglo-American delay in opening a second front and the Soviet role in defeating the Axis; (2) the Allied failure to respond to the Holocaust; (3) the extent to which Norman Rockwell's illustration of the Four Freedoms is an accurate portrayal of the American image; (4) the decision to use the atomic bomb. What are students to conclude when all their lessons call into question *Allied* conduct?

As for the Standards on the effects of the war, these include questions on women workers, internment of the Japanese-Americans, the anti-Hispanic "zoot-suit" riots, the wartime contributions of African-, Mexican-, and Native-Americans, and two more on the internment of the *nisei*. Millions of mothers and wives of servicemen, not to mention the (overwhelmingly white male) veterans themselves who risked their lives to destroy fascism, may wonder why there is no room for them.

The cold war, defined as the morally neutral "swordplay of the Soviet Union and United States," is important not because this nation sacrificed for four decades to contain another totalitarian empire, but rather

> because it led to the Korean and Vietnam wars as well as the Berlin airlift, Cuban missile crisis, American interventions in many parts of the world, a huge investment in scientific research, and environmental damage that will take generations to rectify. It demonstrated the power of American public opinion in reversing foreign policy, it tested the democratic system to its limits, and it left scars on American society that have not yet been erased.

Accordingly, the lesson plans make no mention of Soviet expansion, or Soviet and Chinese totalitarianism and mass murder. Instead, one

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of three questions for grades 5-6 is about McCarthyism; three of five questions for grades 7-8 are about McCarthyism; and two of three questions for Grades 9-12 are about . . . McCarthyism, while the third asks students how "U.S. support for 'self-determination'" conflicted with "the USSR's desire for security" in Eastern Europe, and whether we threatened the Soviets through "atomic diplomacy."

So instructed, students would be hard-put to explain why the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and ultimately China joined hands in fear of the Soviet Union. So beset by red herrings, students would be easy prey for conspiracy theories linking the cold war to hysterical anti-Communism or the military-industrial complex.

There may be no such thing as Truth-with-a-capital-T about complicated historical phenomena. But there is such a thing as discernible Falsehood. And the above is an example—with a capital F.

THE Standards came into existence because of the widespread realization that young people are largely ignorant of history. Now that the project has borne fruit, it is clear that people had different ideas as to what students are ignorant of. A parent of the older generation may be shocked that students do not know our first President. A professor from the 60's generation may be shocked that students do not "know" that the U.S. was at least equally at fault for the cold war. An avatar of the "new history" may be shocked that students do not know Susan B. Anthony, and would rather discuss MTV.

The co-director of the Standards project, Gary B. Nash of UCLA, says his benign purpose was to liberate pupils from the "prison of facts" that make history "boring." But facts are not imprisoning: they are all we have to *liberate* us from the tyranny of deception and opinion, our own as well as others'. Liberals used to believe that; it is terrifying to learn they no longer do. And as for history being boring, the fault for that lies, always, with the teacher. How can you possibly make the French Revolution boring?

Let us be honest. These Standards are too demanding for most *college* surveys. They are offensive to all who value the exceptional achievements of the American experiment. They will even fail to advance the cause of the politically correct, and that is because they aim to debunk historical myths that have not been imparted to this generation in the first place. Ghetto blacks and Valley girls are not going to have their consciousness raised. They will simply imbibe (or ignore) a new myth concocted by a new "over-thirty" elite.

What is more, the Standards' droning critique of white, middle-class American men may provoke an intellectual backlash as earnest (if not as violent) as the student revolts of the 60's. The authors of the Standards may not realize this because (I suspect) they are still aiming their arrows at their own parents and teachers from the 50's and 60's. But they are hitting the kids of today between the eyes.

Those kids are bleeding. I see it every semester in my Ivy League classrooms. Graduate students who are ignorant of the bare skeleton of the historical narrative. Honor students who cannot write grammatical English. Average students who cannot write, do not read, and will not think. Or are intimidated. Or handicapped by self-hatred, self-righteousness, second-hand anger, or cynicism. The youth of Athens, corrupted.

My plea to high-school teachers is this: forget the politics—forget *your* politics. Just make sure your graduates can read and write, know some geography, and know when the Civil War happened. For if they do, then college professors will have something to build on. As it is now, we spend much of our time conveying basic facts, correcting writing, and debunking the reverse myths so widely taught in high schools: "No, Mr. Slackoff, we did not drop the atomic bomb on Japan rather than Germany because we were racist. The first atomic test did not occur until two months after Germany surrendered. Meanwhile, do you know what a dangling participle is?"

The battle of Standards is part of a larger war: Donald Kagan's fight for Western Civ at Yale; the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian; the politicization of the American Historical Association which voted in 1982 to condemn the Reagan defense build-up on the learned conclusion that it would provoke nuclear war. In light of this melee, the notion that nationally-mandated Standards are wise is mad. I agree with Hanna Gray, president-emeritus of the University of Chicago, when she writes that "certification" of a version of history is "contrary to every principle that should animate the free discussion of 'knowledge.'" But she ducks one point. Children will be exposed to one textbook, one teacher. They *will* have standards imposed on them. So the question remains: who chooses?

I have no instrumental solution. But I do know that none will work unless educators remember their calling, which is not to impart attitudes, feelings, or even convictions, but knowledge and wisdom. These are hard to acquire, harder still to impart. But they are what breed success, and success is what breeds self-esteem. That is why the late Carl Becker, whose high-school text first hooked me on history, and a liberal at a time when liberals still honored liberty, dedicated his otherwise "Eurocentric" *Modern History*

TO ALL TEACHERS
OF WHATEVER RACE OR COUNTRY
OF WHATEVER PERSUASION
WHO WITH SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE
HAVE ENDEAVORED TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE
AND PROMOTE WISDOM IN THE WORLD.

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Putting Children Last

Mary Eberstadt

OVER the last several years, something like a national consensus has come to form around the proposition that large numbers of children—particularly young children—live in circumstances tantamount to crisis. "Legions of American children," as a *New York Times* editorialist put it last fall, "are growing up without fathers, with children for parents, in neighborhoods so dangerous that they can hope only to make it through the week, rather than plan for the rest of their lives."

Similar concern was expressed last year by the child-care expert Penelope Leach in her latest book, *Children First: What Our Society Must Do—and Is Not Doing—For Our Children Today.* Last year also saw a spate of other alarums over the state of American childhood. The facts, according to the Carnegie Corporation in its widely-disseminated report, *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*, "add up to a crisis that jeopardizes our children's healthy development, undermines school readiness, and ultimately threatens our nation's economic strength."

Yet, for all the ubiquitous talk of "our children" and "our families," there is really no mistaking *whose* children are being scrutinized here. When Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund writes of a "crusade to save all our children," for example, she is probably not referring to her neighbors in northwest Washington, D.C. Similarly, when the president of the D.C. Junior League writes that "a disproportionate number of our children will grow up poor, undereducated, untrained, and at-risk," we know without having to be told which children she has in mind. They are not, in all likelihood, her own children—or yours, or mine; they are, rather, the children of the underclass.

And just as the rest of us now concur on the perils of an underclass childhood, so are we also agreed about what it is those children need most: in a word, parents. This consensus, too, seems genuinely bipartisan. "Children who do not live with a mother and a father," as former Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan put it recently, "are more likely to be high-school dropouts, more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and more likely to be dependent on welfare than children who live with both biological parents."

Conversely, most of us also believe that good parents, however disadvantaged, can make all the difference. The solution to the problems of the worst-off public schools, say Jesse Jackson and Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, is parental involvement. The solution to crime, says Governor Roy Romer of Colorado, is "parenting, parenting, parenting." Parents, say President Clinton, Dan Quayle, and many, many other public figures from Left to Right, are the make-or-break custodians of children's well-being. Divided though the educated public may be about the meaning, if any, of "family values," in the matter of the underclass and *its* values, at least, the rest of us seem more or less agreed.

The yin and yang of "us" and "them" is further reinforced by social science. With enough income and enough education—so the numbers seem to tell us—the "risk factors" of an underclass childhood drop away. And thus begins the search for solutions: if we could only make their mothers marry their fathers; if we could only make their parents a little older; if we could only do something about welfare and give them jobs instead—in short, if "we" could only make "them" more like the rest of us, then the problems of their children would disappear.

Is this, however, true? For some time, I have followed with more than ordinary interest what the rest of us seem to do and read and write on the subject of child-rearing. To review these sources in even a cursory way is to be struck by the very different standards to which underclass parents and the rest of us have come to be held. For quite a while now, as it turns out, a sea change has been under way in the child-rearing philosophy and practices popular among enlightened American parents. Perhaps the least-known facet of today's "children's crisis" is that child-rearing among the better-off, devoid though it may be of

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the familiar "risk factors" of the poor, has nonetheless come to exhibit what can fairly be called pathologies of its own.

To judge by the volume of reading matter they consume, one might think that today's parents are more child-focused, perhaps even child-obsessed, than any generation before them. Yet such a conclusion would be seriously mistaken. For the curious fact is that during the same years in which underclass parents have increasingly been urged to take responsibility, make sacrifices, and place their children first, middle- and upper-middle-class parents have been enthusiastically consuming the opposite message. From child-care experts to general-interest books and magazines, the sorts of cultural authorities to whom better-off parents turn for advice have become increasingly less solicitous of children as such, and increasingly more solicitous of parents instead.

Modern parents, as is well-known, read compulsively about their condition. This reflexive turn to expert advice, toward raising children by the book, did not start yesterday, of course. But whereas the mothers and fathers of 30-some years ago could rely on a single volume—usually Benjamin Spock's classic *Baby and Child Care*—their counterparts today require many more to feel similarly well-equipped for life with baby.

There are, to begin with, the scores of volumes available on the subject of pregnancy alone—books like Tracy Hotchner's *Pregnancy and Childbirth*, Sheila Kitzinger's *Pregnancy Day by Day*, and the immensely popular set by Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Eisenberg Murkoff, and Sandee Eisenberg Hathaway on *What to Expect When You're Expecting* ("America's pregnancy bible") and *What to Eat When You're Expecting*. Then there are the works on babyhood and the early years, including popular volumes by experts who include—among many others—T. Berry Brazelton (*On Becoming a Family, Working and Caring*), Penelope Leach (*Your Baby and Child, Your Growing Child, Babyhood, The First Six Months*), Teresa and Frank Caplan (*The First Twelve Months of Life, The Second Twelve Months of Life, The Early Childhood Years*), and, of course, Benjamin Spock, whose *Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946, is now in its sixth edition with over 40 million copies sold.

In addition to all of these, there are also the more specialized volumes addressing almost every imaginable permutation of family life—books on raising an only child, an adopted child, a stepchild, twins, daughters, and sons; books on the development and psychology of the one-year-old, the two-year-old, the three-year-old, and so on; books on how to get your child to eat properly, toilet-train properly, behave properly, and (most of all) sleep properly. Then there are the shelves that tackle the larger questions of family life today: infertility, divorce, adoption, gay parenting, single parenting, blended-family parenting, and more.

For more sophisticated tastes, there are still other books addressing what might be called the metaphysics of family life, from historical arguments like Ferdinand Mount's *The Subversive Family* to works of contemporary sociology and pop-sociology like Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* and Arlene Skolnick's *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty*. All this, of course, is to say nothing of the publishing torrent occasioned by the national debate over "family values"; or of the many journals, magazines, newsletters, and "lifestyle" pages devoted to current issues of family life.

One example of the changes under way in this burgeoning literature is the decline of ideas associated with what experts call "attachment."

Attachment theory, which was until recently a cornerstone of modern writings on child care and child development, was rooted in the observations made of orphaned and refugee babies in England after the end of World War II. Some of these babies, to the surprise of researchers, fell victim to a syndrome known as "failure to thrive" despite having all their physical needs met by excellent institutional care. Indeed, some infants even died—again, with no overriding physical cause apparent.

Babies, many experts subsequently concluded, seem to need more than physical care in order to develop properly. In particular, they require an overriding attachment to a specific person. Reduced to its practical implications, the meaning of attachment theory is obvious: since each baby needs a "special person" to attach to, that person—who is typically the mother—should be available to the baby much of the time for the sake of the baby's sound development.

For decades, the ideas associated with attachment theory reigned supreme in the child-care literature.* Today, however, they are the object of a vigorous revisionism. Some of this revision is occurring at the clinical level as researchers question how "attachment" is to be measured. Some of it is of a more general nature; even those who seem to accept the fundamentals of the theory, for example, now debate its implications for actual parents. So far-reaching has this new reluctance become that it has demonstrably affected the work of even the most stalwart and authoritative defenders of attachment and the mother-infant bond.

One such expert is T. Berry Brazelton. Often called America's leading pediatrician, he is the author or co-author of numerous classics on infant and child development. In earlier versions of

* For a succinct and eloquent statement, see "The Origins of Human Bonds," by Selma Fraiberg in the December 1967 Commentary.

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those works, Brazelton more than once voiced his qualms over early and extended separation of infants and toddlers from their mothers. The 1969 edition of his well-known *Infants and Mothers*, for example, stated that "two mothers are not as good as one," and suggested that early separation was to be avoided whenever possible. In *Toddlers and Parents* (1974), he similarly suggested that such separation could affect the child adversely, and by way of example devoted a chapter to the plight of a seriously withdrawn little girl.

In recent years, however—years in which Brazelton became a target of criticism—he has largely dropped his admonitions. He has also come to apologize for offending readers with having uttered them in the first place. As he writes in the latest edition of *Infants and Mothers*:

> Inadvertently, I may have added to mothers' feelings of guilt when they were not able to stay at home throughout the first year. This has not been my intent, for I have seen how critical it was to many young women to include a job in their daily lives.

Note another element here, too: a shift in focus from what was once judged critical to the child (attachment) to what is now judged critical to the mother (in this case, a job).

Another leading authority whose views have undergone an evolution similar to Brazelton's is Benjamin Spock. Throughout most of his career, Spock too urged that mothers with children under the age of three stay home with them as much as possible. As late as 1977, he could still observe that "If a mother realizes clearly how vital this kind of care is to a small child it may make it easier to decide that the extra money she may earn . . . is not so important after all."

Today, following years of criticism, Spock, like Brazelton, has amended his presentation considerably. In the 1992 edition of *Baby and Child Care*, he scrubs his prose clean of any suggestions unpalatable to today's reader and explicitly overrules his earlier advice to mothers:

> *Parents who know that they need a career or a certain kind of work for fulfillment should not give it up for the sake of their children.* Instead, I think such parents should work out some kind of compromise between their two jobs and the needs of their children, usually with the help of other caregivers, especially during the crucial first three years of a child's development [emphasis in the original].

In his latest book, *A Better World for Our Children: Rebuilding American Values*, Spock does venture to say that "it is particularly *desirable* [emphasis added] for one [parent] or the other to have plenty of time with infants and small children in the first two or three years. . . ." Yet "desirable" is not as strong as "important," and not even in the ballpark of "necessary," the word Spock himself preferred some years ago. Moreover, even this mild suggestion does not arise until most of the way through the book, where it is immediately undercut by the observation that "the solution is not to try to turn back the clock." Thereupon the matter is simply dropped.

A THIRD source whose work has changed markedly in recent times is Penelope Leach. In her case, the change is most surprising. Leach, today perhaps the Western world's most popular authority on child development, is famous—some would say infamous—for grounding her ideas in attachment theory. Indeed, so far as her detractors are concerned, she is the most retrograde figure in the advice market today. She continues, for example, to insist on the importance of one-on-one care for infants. To this day, Leach remains opposed to institutional care for children under eighteen months of age—a position that has earned her criticism, particularly from feminists, for many years.

Nevertheless, with the publication last year of her latest book, *Children First*, even Penelope Leach turns out to have moved in unexpected directions. For one thing, she seems to have decided that at-home mothering is not so natural after all. "The necessity for 'full-time exclusive mothering,'" she writes now, "has been exposed as a myth of the postwar West." Even more dramatic, however, is the change in Leach's authorial perspective. Whereas her earlier works focus on what children need from their parents—indeed, they are written largely from the child's point of view—*Children First* is focused instead on what *parents* need.

"Our society," Leach has come to believe, has "devalued parents to such an extent that individual good parenting is not only exceedingly difficult but, ultimately, insufficient." "Everything parents can do," she adds, "is clearly not enough." And so, instead of looking to parents, we should look to what Leach calls the "top" of society—the public and private elite—to procure what both children and their parents need.

Whatever else may be said of Leach's argument, it certainly no longer vindicates the charge that she expects too much of mothers and fathers. To judge by *Children First*, the modern parent would seem largely off the hook so far as Leach is now concerned.

Interestingly, one phenomenon that *has* survived in the current advice books is something called "bonding." As a theory for today's parent, most particularly the parent on the go, "bonding" seems to have distinct advantages over "attachment." For one thing, it does not take nearly so long. *What to Expect the First Year*, a handbook in the *What to Expect* series, says that "bonding can take three months," or in particularly difficult circumstances such as colic, "five or six." Other sources reduce bonding to an even shorter period, such as the first weeks, or days, or even hours of an infant's life. The record may be held

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by Tracy Hotchner's *Pregnancy and Childbirth*: the "30 to 45 minutes" following birth.

Now, some would argue that there is an obvious explanation for such shrinking estimations of what infants need. By 1991, according to the Census Bureau, some 58 percent of American mothers with children under the age of six were working outside the home. College-educated women—that is, those most prone to read the advice books—are even more likely to return to full-time work in the first year of an infant's life than are others. College-educated or no, however, all these mothers—and especially those who cannot choose otherwise—share similar needs and anxieties. It is understandable that child-care advice would adjust itself to their particular needs. Indeed, it would seem peculiar if the literature did otherwise.

But if the reality of working motherhood were the only force driving changes in child philosophy, one would expect the literature to reflect that fact. One would expect, say, to find writers trying to assuage parental fears—particularly the fears of a working mother with a baby or small children at home. One would also expect to hear that work itself is a neutral factor in the well-being of children, in itself neither bad nor good. And one does read thoughts like these; but they are not at the cutting edge. Rather, to a surprising number of experts as well as respected lay writers, working motherhood is no longer to be considered *an* option; it is instead to be considered the *better* option.

Of course, influential feminists have long maintained that women are better off with an active life or career outside the home. Some have gone so far as to argue that homemaking alone makes women sick. As Susan Faludi puts the point in her bestselling book, *Backlash* (1991):

> Whether they are professional or blue-collar workers, working women experience less depression than housewives; and the more challenging the career, the better their mental and physical health. Woman who have never worked have the highest level of depression. Working women are less susceptible than housewives to mental disorders big and small—from suicides and nervous breakdowns to insomnia and nightmares. . . .

The child-care and parenting literature of today, however, often goes beyond claiming benefits even as impressive as these. Now, working motherhood not only makes the woman a better or happier person, but also—it is said—a better *mother.*

Here, for example, is T. Berry Brazelton in the introduction to his *Working and Caring* (1985):

> . . . [T]here are benefits for every member of the family when a woman feels fulfilled. Research clearly demonstrates that, if a woman is successful and happy at work, she is *more likely* to be successful at home, and as a mother [emphasis added].

Some writers cite their personal experience as additional proof. A classic example appeared last year in the "Editorial Notebook" section of the *New York Times*, where one mother wrote:

> Indeed, the most damage I did to any of my kids was during a period, shortly after graduating from college, when I was briefly swayed by the Leach Theory and stayed at home for some months with my first daughter. She was (of course) a bright child; she became my Project. I bombarded her with flash cards, organized activities for her, and was generally so obnoxious that, after learning to read at three, she subsequently refused to read for nearly five years. . . . Why are there no studies of the damage done to children by high-energy women who have no business staying at home? . . . I think [my mother] was a better mom *because* she worked. I think I am too [emphasis in original].

Nor is Mother said to be the only one who benefits by going out to work. According to the eminently authoritative American Academy of Pediatrics in *Caring for Your Young Baby and Child* (1991), when the mother works,

> the father participates in household chores and child-rearing as well as bread-winning. *This brings him much closer to the children and often makes him more emotionally supportive of his wife than he otherwise might be* [emphasis added].

In addition to producing better mothers and better fathers, working motherhood is also said to benefit the children themselves. Again, the American Academy of Pediatrics:

> As a mother who successfully manages both an outside job and parenthood, you provide an excellent role model for your child. He will be proud of your achievements and feel motivated to become *more* independent, responsible, and achievement-oriented himself [emphasis added].

Anita Shreve, author of several books on modern family life, believes that children may even become smarter once their mothers are out of the house. In fact, Shreve writes in *Remaking Motherhood* (1987), "a higher I.Q." is only one of the benefits the children of working mothers may come to enjoy. Others include

> better social adjustment, . . . more expansive sex-role ideology, greater self-esteem, greater confidence in one's abilities, a more positive view of women, better educational progress, more vocational options, and a potential for greater economic independence.

The idea that children are better off when left to the care of others is also a recurring theme in both expert and popular writings. For years, anxious parents who have

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placed their children in day care have sought assurances that the experience would not turn out to be harmful. For years, those assurances have been given, subject to certain caveats: the quality of care must be good; the staff-to-child ratio must be low; the child should not be an infant (though experts disagree about whether this matters); and so on. Today, however, several authoritative sources make a rather different point. Day care is not only equal to home care; it is *better.*

"Day care," as the American Academy of Pediatrics handbook puts it, "seems to have some important benefits for young children." "The consequences," summarizes a reviewer for the *New York Times Book Review,* "are mostly positive or benign." Current studies, a psychologist tells the *Washington Post,* "have assured most educators and researchers that children suffer no psychological harm, and may reap some emotional benefits, from day care and other nonfamily care." "If day care has any long-term effect on children," echoes Susan Faludi, "it seems to make children slightly more gregarious and independent."

As before, some advocates strike a personal note. "My kids got dropped off at day care," Barbara Ehrenreich reported last Mother's Day in the *New York Times,* "and one is now finishing up at Brown, and the other went through Harvard and Oxford." "Our son," echoed Caryl Rivers in the *Washington Post,* also last Mother's Day, "got a 3.6 grade-point average in grad school and was the valedictorian of his class in police academy . . . our daughter [is a] Shakespearean actress. . . ."

So insistent has the emphasis on benefits become that any bearer of bad news about day care tends to be harshly criticized. This is what happened to Jay Belsky, a professor at Pennsylvania State University, who in a scholarly article in 1988 observed that day care could have ill effects on infants, including "insecure attachment, . . . heightened aggressiveness, noncompliance, and withdrawal. . . ." The result, as James Q. Wilson later summarized it, was that Belsky "was excoriated, . . . many attacked him politically, and even the scholarly critiques had a sharp edge to them."* In 1993, the Carnegie Corporation's *Starting Points* pointed out that day-care centers varied widely in quality. The report was subsequently criticized in several prominent places, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post,* for its alleged insensitivity to working mothers.

In the meantime, we have had other positive estimations of leaving children to their own devices. Consider latchkey children—or, as a new euphemism has it, children engaged in "self-care." These children, too, are said to be better off alone, according to Stephanie Coontz in her highly acclaimed *The Way We Never Were* (1992):

> . . . [A] North Carolina study found that teachers rated latchkey children as better adjusted socially than were children in either home care or child-care centers, while studies in Philadelphia and the South showed latchkey children performing equally well with others in school. Researchers also have noted positive effects of self-care on children's sense of self-discipline and responsibility.

Coontz also manages a good word for experimentation with drugs, another behavior more common among children left alone than among those with a parent or sitter at home. Citing a "fifteen-year study of San Francisco children reported in the May 1990 issue of *American Psychologist,*" she reports that

> even adolescents who experiment casually with drugs are not necessarily on the road to ruin. In fact [the report states], "those who tried illegal drugs in small amounts during adolescence tended to be healthier and better-adjusted" than were either complete abstainers or frequent users.

In short, from the diminishing emphasis on attachment theory to the defense of latchkey children, what today's parents are hearing is the message that they are not so important after all. If Benjamin Spock's famous dictum to parents—"You know more than you think you do"—were adapted to the mood of today, it would probably read: You are freer than you think you are.

How much parental freedom is too much? To answer this unwelcome question requires a look not just at theory but at practice.

In *The Overworked American* (1991), Juliet B. Schor observes that "half the population now says they have too little time for their own families." "No time," "too much stress," "too busy," "not enough hours in the day": these and other negative echoes of family life abound in today's analyses and depictions. The harried and embattled suburban family that was powerfully portrayed in the 1950's novel, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit,* has long since lost any power to shock; for many people, especially many parents, its themes of domestic anxiety and stress are now the American norm.

Moreover, it is precisely professional, educated, better-off parents, those whose earnings are highest and who enjoy the most expansive possibilities for outside entertainment, who seem to feel the pressures of time and stress most acutely. As Penelope Leach writes perceptively in *Children First*:

> The material standards of living many of us enjoy and most of us aspire to are higher than they have ever been, but so is their cost. People who can earn enough can achieve a good life but only those who can keep earning more and more can hold on to it, because however

* "The Family-Values Debate," COMMENTARY, April 1993.

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fast money or credit accumulates, luxuries are transformed into necessities even faster.

It was the battle against those stresses that gave rise to the now-common notion of "quality time." Though the phrase itself has lately come into bad odor and been more or less banished from the scene, the idea behind it continues to be touted to parents and practiced by them. In the words of Benjamin Spock, "The number of hours of companionship is generally less important than the quality or spirit of the time spent together, and this is what's behind the expression 'quality time.'"

The search for those special moments together crops up frequently in contemporary children's books and videos, where fictional portrayals of harried and absent parents often make occasions for imaginative flights of fancy. Typical of the genre is an award-winning book called *Gorilla*, in which a seemingly motherless girl whose father is always busy with his home computer is rescued from her loneliness by a magic toy.

Such preoccupations also surface frequently in popular fare for grown-ups. Whole episodes of the bygone television show *thirtysomething*, for example, were devoted to the quest among anxious parents for meaningful time together with their children. Such too is the nervous leitmotif of *thirtysomething*'s heir apparent, *Murphy Brown*. In fact, in an interesting footnote to the entire debate over *Murphy Brown* that was sparked by then-Vice President Dan Quayle, Murphy's notorious baby has lately all but disappeared from the screen. He is now, one might say, more talked-about than talking—a condition, to judge by much of the periodical literature in today's cult of parenting, fast becoming endemic to his budding generation.

One such publication, exceedingly representative, is *Washington Parent*, a bimonthly news-magazine and how-to bible for parents in the D.C. area. Like many such publications—and like the advice market generally—*Washington Parent* is replete with useful and interesting tips for parents of all sorts: how to cope with allergies, give a good birthday party, plant a child's garden. At the same time, it is a resource of particular interest to the affluent, self-conscious, high-achieving mothers and fathers who read it the most and who diligently canvas its advertising section where the whole smorgasbord of private accelerated education is on offer, in music, dance, art, math, horseback riding, computers, soccer, and on and on.

Many insights into the daily lives of such families emerge in *Washington Parent*'s essays and columns. Thus: "If you are running to the bus stop, or driving a child to day care, these can be important moments to solidify relationships before a long separation." "At least once a week there needs to be an unstructured play time with each child." "Whenever possible, each parent needs to spend at least fifteen minutes of quiet time with each child each night."

"Moments," "once-a-week play," "fifteen minutes": the language of the appointment book, drawn in this case from an essay on "A Healthy Family: Minimum Daily Requirements," speaks loudly about the pace of domesticity on the fast track.

JUST how absent is the 90's parent? Absent enough, to judge by *Washington Parent* and other sources, to need tips like: "read favorite stories into a tape recorder"; "leav[e] a 'prized' possession of yours with your child"; "try to avoid arriving home at ten at night and going to the office at eight the next morning."

Last July, *Harper's* magazine reprinted excerpts from a pamphlet called "Guilt Trips" distributed by MCI Telecommunications. The MCI pamphlet proposes "positive parenting steps" to make separations easier on the conscience, and, as in *Washington Parent*, the solutions are essentially technological—sending messages by fax, tape-recording bedtime stories, arranging for the videotaping of children's events ("the soccer championship") that take place while parents are away. Even the parent too busy to record his own bedtime stories can rely on the information age to see him through—especially if he lives in New York, where a prerecorded storytelling-by-phone service called *Let's Imagine!!!* is available for 85 cents a minute.

As for how much absenteeism might be too much, no one will say. Instead, parents are regularly told to spend more time on those individuals near and dear to them: to wit, themselves. Two writers described as mental-health professionals put the point recently in *Washington Parent*:

> In terms of dealing with the disappointments, fatigue, and worries of daily life, parents must turn their attention to taking care of themselves. This is perhaps not what we are accustomed to hearing about parenting. We think of sacrifice and devotion, not of our own needs. But this is wrong.

Actually, it is these authors who are somewhat wrong. If there is a single message on which most writers in the advice market agree, it is precisely that "parents must turn their attention to taking care of themselves." From the pages of the *Washington Parent*: "We have to be healthy and content with ourselves before we have the ability to truly give to our children." "We cannot be truly available to our children if we are depressed or depleted. We must care about ourselves." "We are the best role models for our children. If they see us happy and content then they know that it is possible for them to achieve that too."

Such messages make a claim now ubiquitous in the wider literature: the happy parent is by definition the better parent. The corollary axiom

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is that parents need feel no guilt—in fact, they should feel *good*—about putting their own wants and needs ahead of their children's. This "not guilty" verdict echoes from the breeziest pieces of the "life-style" genre to the weightiest of child-care authorities.

"Modern life," as *Washington Parent* counsels, "really isn't your fault. Your hands are clean. You're not guilty." Even more satisfying is the line of reasoning proposed in a recent book called *Child Care/Parent Care.* According to its authors, Marilyn Heins and Anne M. Seiden: "When parents are too stressed, or too unfulfilled, or too guilty to take their own needs into account, the children suffer." So we come full circle. Not only do children not suffer when parents put their own interests first. To the contrary: they turn out to suffer when parents *fail* to put their own interests first.

Few contemporary writers have risen in dissent against today's tendency to put parents and their "needs" at center stage. Perhaps the most important is David Elkind, author most recently of *Ties That Stress: The New Family Imbalance* and of the landmark book, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon* (1981). In that earlier work, Elkind suggested what is now a decidedly unorthodox view of the sources of unhappiness among affluent children. To him, that unhappiness sprang from "the feeling of being used, of being exploited by parents, of losing the identity and uniqueness of childhood without just cause." A primary cause of these unhealthy developments, Elkind charged, is parents—parents who "relieve some of the stresses on themselves by stressing their children."

Elkind's book, ironically enough, became an instant classic. Well-read parents certainly have heard of it, and a fair number will have read it. Meanwhile, though, far from dissipating, the trends Elkind described almost fifteen years ago have grown stronger still, and a swelling chorus insists that they are all to the good. It is an irony which would not surprise the author of *The Hurried Child* himself, who observed in that book that "we have accumulated a large library of data and knowledge about the period of life we call childhood," and that if, in spite of everything we know, we nevertheless persist in hurrying children to grow up too fast, "then it is surely not done out of ignorance."

A CHILD born today to the proverbial teenage mother will go home to a neighborhood the rest of us can barely imagine. He will probably, indeed almost certainly, grow up poor. He will more likely than not be affected by "risk factors" deleterious to his health and sound development—drug use, violent crime, substandard medical care, perhaps even neglect or abuse. Perhaps above all, he may not know or ever see his father.

No one is likely to say, or ever to believe, that the mode of family life into which that child has been born is somehow better than if he had both his parents present and attending to him. No one would say, or ever accept, that his parents have a virtually unlimited right to put their own needs and fulfillment ahead of his own. And almost certainly no one would accept that exercising that right to the fullest is in *his* best interests.

To understand one small but significant part of what ails the rest of us, it is worth at least pausing to ask why, when it comes to our own children, we are willing to say and to believe precisely these unnatural things.

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The Crime and Punishment Festival

Mark Lasswell

THE newest arrival at the trauma unit of Chicago's Cook County Hospital managed to reply lucidly to the first few urgent questions posed to her after paramedics wheeled her in one night last July. She was a black woman in her early twenties who had been shot once near her pubis, destroying the femoral artery and vein serving her left leg. As blood pumped from the wound and she headed into shock, each query about her medical history elicited an answer vaguer than the preceding one. "Her lights were on," remembers Dr. John Fildes, an attending surgeon who was on duty at the time, "but nobody was home."

Laboring for twelve hours, Fildes mended the damage and succeeded in restoring the blood flow, all the while expecting he would eventually have to amputate below the knee. As his patient recuperated at home, though, he was amazed to find that the only problem caused by the blood deprivation was with her big toe. Blood vessels there had been damaged and the flesh slowly began to darken and die. Months passed. Finally, the woman called Fildes at home during the second weekend of November to register her weariness with tending to her toe. The time had come to amputate, and Fildes arranged to meet her at the hospital.

After six years working in the Cook County Hospital trauma unit, where 4,221 patients were admitted last year, and for six years before that at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center in New York, Fildes has seen just about everything that can result from perils to the human body, but he had never before encountered anything like what he discovered when his patient arrived for her appointment that Monday and the dressing was removed from her toe. Doing her best to improve its unappetizing appearance, the woman had, while giving herself a pedicure, dabbed a bit of nail polish on it, too—not realizing that she had no nail there to polish. Gangrene had so withered the flesh that half an inch of distal phalanx protruded where the tip of her toe should have been. She had been applying red enamel to white bone.

As it happened, that very November weekend when Fildes's patient called him to do something about the lingering reminder of the shooting, experts of every stripe, also anxious to do something about gunshot wounds—and stabbings, robberies, rapes, and the whole hideous menu of criminality that blights modern life—were convening in Chicago at the invitation of the Illinois Humanities Council. They had gathered for Chicago Humanities Festival V, a kaleidoscope of lectures, panel discussions, musical and theatrical performances, and other events—39 in all—devoted to the theme, "Crime and Punishment."

"Since its inception five years ago the Chicago Humanities Festival has taken a fresh approach to a problem that dominates the news," noted the publicity material. And this time the festival's organizers could congratulate themselves on their oneness with the *Zeitgeist*. The crime issue last fall dominated much of the news, as well as many political campaigns and plenty of opinion polls. As election day approached, the *New Yorker* had run a Bob Mankoff cartoon in which a man proposing marriage is told by his girlfriend, "I'm fond of you Dave, I really am, but you're just not tough enough on crime."

The gathering's sponsors—including the MacArthur Foundation, the Sara Lee Corporation, and the First National Bank of Chicago—certainly thought the subject was ripe, and the festival calendar extended a double-starred "THANK YOU!" to more than a dozen underwriters in all. Festival V clearly was riding some sort of wave; even *Town & Country* sent a correspondent.

I planned to attend as much of it as I could, but I also wanted to see how the issues under discussion were playing out in the city where the festival was being held. To that end, I rode the night shift with Chicago police officers whose beat included the scabrous Cabrini Green housing project; interviewed a public defender assigned to a team of lawyers that exclusively handles homicide cases; spent several hours in the Cook County Hospital trauma unit; monitored the three-day crime tally at police headquarters; and sat in on a felony-review session as Illinois State's attorneys examined the cases they had decided to prosecute from a weekend's worth

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of crime. Still, there was plenty of time left over for me to attend events like the crime festival's gala dinner and many of its performances, exhibits, and talks.

Friday, 6:30 P.M.

THE first big event of the Crime and Punishment festival is a staged reading of T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* at St. James Episcopal Cathedral on the Near North Side. Commissioned by the Canterbury Festival of 1935 to write a poetic drama about the conflict between Thomas à Becket and Henry II, Eliot intended *Murder in the Cathedral* (as he later explained it) for those who go to religious plays "and expect to be patiently bored and to satisfy themselves with the feeling that they have done something meritorious," and "for an audience of those serious people who go to 'festivals' and expect to have to put up with poetry."

In Chicago, it becomes apparent, audiences have to put up not only with poetry but with politics. The program for *Murder in the Cathedral* takes a startlingly contemporary view of Eliot's play. The Reverend Professor R. William Franklin of the General Theological Seminary in New York explains to us that we should think of Becket in terms of "a parallel figure," the late Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador, who "was also murdered by four government agents before the high altar of his cathedral in 1980 in San Salvador because he sought to defend the rights of the Church of El Salvador."

Maria Scott, an English professor at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, performs a close reading of Eliot's play and turns up evidence that Old Possum was a closet feminist. The "real losers" in the battle between the "patriarchal hierarchies" of Becket's church and Henry's state, Professor Scott says,

> are the poor and disenfranchised, specifically the women of Canterbury who make up the Chorus. They are the true alternative to institutional struggle, but the women are doomed from the beginning to be subsumed by the patriarchal struggle.

About 600 people pack the pews, others sit in the aisles. It turns out to be a typical Crime and Punishment festival audience in that it is almost entirely white and middle-class.

Friday, 9:00 P.M.

ONE of the Chicago Police Department's three shifts ends. Crime in that eight-hour spell includes a baseball-bat attack by a half-dozen gang members on a twenty-one-year-old black male; the rape of a forty-five-year-old black woman walking along South King Street when two black men accost her, smash her in the head, and drag her into a vacant building; and the shooting of a twenty-six-year-old black male standing on the sidewalk along South Steward Street when a young man walks up and announces that he is a Gangster Disciple before pulling out a gun and squeezing the trigger. His victim is listed in good condition at Christ Hospital with a bullet wound in the jaw.

Friday, 9:05 P.M.

ACCUSTOMED to foreseeing and solving problems, Eileen R. Mackevich, executive producer of the Chicago Humanities Festival, has a foolproof method for putting her guests at ease. During the party she throws for festival participants in her home on Lake Shore Drive, she navigates from one cluster of guests to the next with her dog, a Maltese named George, perched on her chest, his tiny head, with its long white fur, resting on her shoulder. George is an instant conversation-starter.

Not that Mackevich needs one: she worked on local public radio for about a dozen years in the 70's and 80's, and, like any good radio veteran, has no tolerance for dead air. Even her red-walled apartment seems dedicated to not letting interest flag. "I like to live in red," Mackevich later tells me. "It's fun—it's like being onstage."

The only drama during my first hour at the party is the fleeting threat that the chicken tonnato at the buffet will run out. But then, a little after 10:00 P.M., Mackevich suddenly begins to clap as several young black men emerge from the elevator. The rappers have arrived. Two groups, D.O.P.E. Mob (for Destroy Other Poets' Effectiveness) and 180, will be performing at Orchestra Hall tomorrow afternoon, but now they are here, basking in Mackevich's applause.

Not many others recognize them. The guests include the mystery writers Stuart Kaminsky, Elizabeth George, and Batia Gur (panelists on Sunday, 1:00 P.M.: "The Who's Who Talk About Whodunit! Stellar Best-sellers Explore Crime, Punishment, and Plot"); Congressman Lane Evans, a Democrat from Illinois (Saturday, 3:30 P.M.: "War Veterans as Outcasts: The Legacy of Vietnam"); New York University music professor Robert Bailey (Sunday, 4:00 P.M.: "Wagnerian Opera: Archetypes of Redemption"); and Illinois Humanities Council board member and socialite-author Donna Rautbord, a sort of Second City Ivana Trump, whom everyone calls Sugar. As Mackevich later says, some of these people have never heard rap before.

Perhaps sensing that some orientation will be useful, Joe Oliver, leader of the group 180, hands out copies of the *Journal of Ordinary Thought*, published under the auspices of the University of Illinois's College of Education. The August 1994 issue, "Through the Eyes of a Villain," collects the work of a writing group composed of rappers and rap fans. "I try to write poetry," goes a typical passage in one of several pieces Oliver himself

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contributed, "but it ends up being about the white man or cops. I can't stand you ignorant evil motherf——rs. You make my life miserable."

White women apparently have not particularly cheered up the rapper, either. Oliver speculates that the "woman that fired me from Bloomingdale's" is "an overworked, underpaid, stuck-up ass-kissin' white bitch." Elsewhere in the *Journal of Ordinary Thought* Oliver counsels: "Watch out for women and white people"—the latter have been "tricked by the devil. I can't warn you enough about them."

"Through the Eyes of a Villain" was published with generous financial support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

I leave the party well before midnight, to my later regret when I learn that Oliver gave an impromptu rap performance at the party that night.

Saturday, 12:10 A.M.

"DON'T step in that, it's piss."

I am in the 18th District police station, thinking I have found an out-of-the-way place to stand.

"It's piss," repeats an officer behind the desk as I look down uncomprehendingly at what appears to be chemically-treated sawdust sprinkled on the floor. "A homeless gentleman decided to cause a scene," adds another officer behind the desk, motioning toward the ragged figures crowded beyond the glass doors of the station house. (Coming into the 18th District at night in cold weather means running a gauntlet of destitute souls who sleep in the enclosure between the building's inner and outer doors.)

I am there to hook up with two officers for a "ride-along." The 18th District spans the spectrum of Chicago's social classes, from the sheltered Gold Coast enclave on the lake to the Cabrini Green housing projects. Between them is a buffer zone, the middle-class area around Rush Street, studded with bars and populated at night by "708ers," the designation police give to suburbanites who live outside the city's 312 area code.

Officer James A. Sim, a 27-year veteran, and Ed Kelly, a rookie just a week out of the police academy, do not make any arrests during the four hours I ride with them. But there is plenty of racing the patrol car through the streets. The officers search for an armed-robbery suspect reported fleeing on foot and wearing a trenchcoat; respond to a call for help by other officers when an arrest outside a crowded Division Street bar nearly turns into a brawl; investigate a report of gunshots at Cabrini Green; and check into an assortment of other calls blurted out over the police radio. In between, there is a lot of "Hey, you can't park there."

Saturday 12:30 P.M.

"CONFLICT RESOLUTION, Cross-Cultural Perspectives" takes place in the A. Montgomery Ward Lecture Hall of Chicago's Field Museum. It is a panel discussion moderated by Alaka Wali, Ph.D., director of the museum's Center for Cultural Understanding and Change. The festival calendar promises an examination of the questions: "Why are Americans so quick to escalate disputes into violence?" and "How do other cultures resolve conflicts?" Wali shows part of a video called *Little Injustices: Laura Nader Looks at the Law,* which compares the difficulties American consumers encounter when they try to complain about defective products with the speedy satisfaction obtained by a vendor in Talea, Mexico, when he lodges a complaint against a trucker who drove over his chilies.

In the discussion that follows the video presentation, a trio of scholars dissect customs in New Guinea, South America, and other locales. The subject of conflict-resolution in America does not really come up until a young woman in the back of the room denounces the United States for punishing car thieves more severely than rapists. Then she blasts the panelists themselves for seeing conflict-resolution "through the prism of property—like materialistic Americans."

Saturday, 1:00 P.M.

AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD black woman argues with her ex-boyfriend on the front porch of her home on South Bishop Street until the conflict is brought to a swift resolution: someone shoots her. Police suspect that one of the former beau's friends did it. The woman is listed in stable condition at Mt. Sinai hospital with a gunshot wound in the left leg.

Saturday, 7:00 P.M.

THE social centerpiece of the Chicago Humanities Festival is the annual dinner, which at Festival V is a $200-a-plate affair at the Art Institute. The entertainment for the evening is "The Trial of Hamlet," an exercise in Shakespeare and the law devised by Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy. A roster of local legal all-stars will try Hamlet for murdering Polonius.

Justice Kennedy presides on the stage of the Rubloff Auditorium as defense lawyers face off against a team of prosecutors. Two forensic psychiatrists, one for each side, are the only witnesses called. Hamlet is pleading not guilty by reason of insanity.

A one-hour intermission allows enough time to usher the crowd from the Rubloff to dinner tables in the Stock Exchange Room (salvaged for the Art Institute after the exchange was demolished in 1972) for a meal of chilled medley of sea scallops, shrimp, and poached salmon on a bed of mixed greens with saffron sauce, grilled veal chop, rosemary whipped potatoes, asparagus, and squash.

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Saturday, 7:45 P.M.

JACK CAREY has not had dinner and his dog, Ralph, needs to go for a walk, so Carey heads over to Milwaukee Avenue with Ralph and stops by El Chino's restaurant to pick up a burrito.

Carey is a public defender, a PD, one of two dozen on an elite team assigned to work exclusively on Cook County murder cases. Being a public defender used to mean taking a vow of poverty, but that no longer holds true: since the Cook County PD's formed a union in the mid-80's, starting salaries have increased from about $20,000 to over $30,000 and top salaries, after fifteen years of service, have jumped from the mid-$40,000 range to over $70,000. "You can look at yourself in the mirror and say, 'I can go on vacation, I can buy a car,'" says Carey, who has been a PD for ten years, five of them on the murder unit.

Late in the afternoon, Carey had driven his 1988 Volkswagen Fox to two addresses hoping to find a woman called Cookie, an elusive witness he needs to talk to for a murder trial that starts on Monday. It is a trial Carey is reluctant to take to court. He wants his client, a nineteen-year-old Puerto Rican, to accept a plea-bargain. But his client refuses to believe he is guilty of anything even though he was behind the wheel during a fatal drive-by shooting. "He's found religion—he thinks God's going to save him," says Carey.

With no luck finding Cookie, Carey drives to the Cook County jail to meet with another client, a black man in his mid-thirties. Told by his wife that a drug dealer had sexually abused their ten-year-old daughter, this man allegedly killed the dealer with a sledgehammer, stored the body in a freezer overnight, and then cut it into eleven pieces with a circular saw.

After the jailhouse meeting, Carey cruises by one of the houses he checked earlier, hoping to find a light on. One is, but the woman who answers the door claims no one else is in the house, so Carey gives up for the night and heads home.

Carey is long divorced and at age forty-two wonders if he will ever remarry and start a family. He is going to a party tonight where he has heard there will be some single women, then on to a favorite nightspot, the Green Mill, to hear a Latin jazz band he admires. But the folders on his desk are never far from his mind. He has spent part of his weekend working on the drive-by shooting and circular-saw cases simply because they are the most pressing; when he gets back to work on Monday, seventeen other murder cases will be waiting. They include:

• A fifteen-year-old member of the Gangster Disciples gang accused of participating in the murder of someone who approached him to buy drugs. The victim's body was stuffed into a trash can. Carey's client made a detailed confession and wants to accept a plea bargain, but his mother refuses to believe he did it and wants the case to go to trial. "It's like we used to say in juvenile court," Carey remarks. "More mothers send their kids to the penitentiary than any state's attorney."

• A twenty-two-year-old male from Honduras accused of killing a prostitute.

• A twenty-eight-year-old black female prostitute, who, Carey says, is epileptic, retarded, schizophrenic, and has AIDS and AIDS-related dementia. Arrested for killing a john, she was committed to a mental hospital in early November.

• A twenty-eight-year-old white male, one of two men charged with murder for torching an apartment building in an arson-for-profit scheme that killed seven.

• A twenty-three-year-old white male, accused of shaking his girlfriend's baby to death.

• A twenty-year-old black woman charged with murder for not protecting her baby even though she was aware that her boyfriend had repeatedly abused the infant. Carey points out that his client grew up in a household where her mother used heroin and her stepfather sexually abused her. But "since she's been in jail, she's gotten her G.E.D.—she's basically in an environment now where she's gotten away from these losers and she has blossomed." Still, in dead-baby cases, he adds, it is hard to drum up much sympathy in court.

• A nineteen-year-old black male accused of a fatal shooting outside a West Side housing project.

• A twenty-year-old black male accused of shooting a man in the head after losing to him in a dice game.

• A thirty-year-old black male accused of strangling his mother and setting her apartment on fire.

• An eighteen-year-old black male, one of three gang members accused of allegedly abducting a girl from her apartment and bludgeoning her with a baseball bat even as she pleaded with them that she was pregnant. She died from her injuries.

• A nineteen-year-old black male charged in a gang-retaliation murder.

• A thirty-five-year-old black male accused of murdering his sister. The sister, a cocaine addict "on the highway to hell," says Carey, had terrorized the neighborhood for months and attacked her brother with the knife that he grabbed and then stabbed her with. "All the neighbors are going to testify," Carey reports, sounding hopeful.

• A twenty-one-year-old black male accused of stalking his former girlfriend, confronting her outside a grocery store, and then stabbing to death a friend of hers who intervened.

• A sixteen-year-old black male charged with murder during a shoot-out between cars on a

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bridge over the Dan Ryan Expressway on the South Side.

• An eighteen-year-old black male. Carey has not seen the police report yet, and his client will only say that he has no idea why he is in jail.

Saturday, 9:30 P.M.

THE remainder of the evening of Hamlet's trial is divided into half-hour segments: closing arguments; dessert (miniature fruit tarts in chocolate cups, chocolate-dipped strawberries, cookies), coffee, tea, champagne and cordials; a last chance to bid at the silent auction; and a verdict (hung jury: Justice Kennedy remands the prisoner to the pages of literature). When court adjourns, we are free to pick up our party favors in the lobby. Mine include a 55-milliliter bottle of Crown Royal blended Canadian whiskey in a plush purple sack, and a sampler of Galanos *eau de toilette.*

Sunday, 10:30 A.M.

THE keynote address by Tom Wolfe, on "Crime and Moral Fever in the 1990's," sells out the 2,590-seat Orchestra Hall. Wolfe puts on a remarkable performance, bringing to the stage many of the attractions of his work. He speaks for well over an hour, never failing to entertain with his lacerating humor and merciless, pitch-perfect social analysis even as he gracefully conveys an enormous amount of information, enlisting everyone from Hobbes, Hegel, and Nietzsche to ATM robbers, world's-worst-mother Susan Smith, and George Pataki to make his point.

Wolfe begins his talk by referring to the just-concluded 1994 elections, "a tidal wave that changed the landscape of American politics literally overnight." Obviously, Wolfe points out, there are deep connections between the results of the elections and the theme of the Chicago festival: crime and punishment are much on America's mind. Yet even Wolfe is unable to say what, exactly, the Republican sweep portends for the criminal chaos of our cities which, in his novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities,* he has captured perhaps better than anyone. He concludes:

> This is a great moment, objectively speaking, in the history of a nation, certainly a good moment, but we are dogged by a question that so far I have not seen answered. That question is: yes, but good for what? And if there is anybody in Orchestra Hall this morning who knows the answer to that question, who can create the higher synthesis that brings us out of the moment of confusion that we've seen this week, not only will you earn the gratitude of your fellow citizens, but you will light up the sky and be famous forever. . . .

Sunday, 3:00 P.M.

THE Cook County Medical Examiner's office is well along in processing the nine bodies brought in from the killings so far this weekend. Among the victims is fifteen-year-old Antoine Bowen, felled in what prosecutors later call a ride-by shooting.

Bowen was hanging out with friends on West 91 Street on Friday night when another fifteen-year-old pedaled past on a bicycle. The bike rider shouted "GDK"—meaning "Gangster Disciple Killer," and thus a sworn enemy of Bowen and company. They shouted gang insults back at him. Police said the teen on the bike then circled the block, wheeled up to the group, and let fly with eight shots from a 9-mm automatic pistol, hitting Bowen in the head. His friends had scattered when they saw the handgun; a stranger found the body.

Wednesday

THREE days after the Crime and Punishment festival ends, local businessmen are scheduled to convene at the Chicago Cultural Center for an invitation-only summit on the prevention of violence. "The premise of the conference is that business leaders can help find a solution to the problems of violence, which detracts from the city's economic vitality," says an article in the *Chicago Tribune* promoting the *Tribune* Foundation-sponsored event. Among the panelists who will be discussing violence prevention: the *Tribune*'s movie critic Gene Siskel.

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Mark Twain and the Jews

Cynthia Ozick

I AM looking at a facsimile of *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories and Essays*, dated 1900. The print is large and clear, the margins generous. There is a frontispiece photograph of the author, Mark Twain, captioned "S.L. Clemens." The copyright, curiously, is not in the name of S.L. Clemens (or of his pseudonym), but in that of Olivia L. Clemens, his wife. (She died in 1904, predeceasing him by six years.)

The fifteen items in the Table of Contents disclose their sources; of periodicals once renowned (*Harper's Magazine*, the *Century*, the *Cosmopolitan*, the *New York World*, the *Youth's Companion*, the *Forum*, *McClure's*, and the *North American Review*), only *Harper's* recognizably survives. The several illustrations (artist unidentified), with their captions excerpted from the text, are redolent of 19th-century charm—the charm of skilled and evocative drawings—and may make us nostalgic for a practice long in disuse: every tale equipped with its visual interpretation.

But a facsimile volume, as an extraordinary artifact, can offer only this much of "history": a list of forgotten magazines, a handful of old-fashioned drawings, an imitative binding. The rest of it is the ordinary job of reading.

"THE Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" was written in 1898, in Europe: specifically, Vienna. Mark Twain was still under the shadow of an indelible bereavement; only two years earlier, in 1896, Susy, the oldest and probably the most literarily gifted of the three Clemens daughters, had suddenly been carried off by cerebral meningitis. Restlessness and grief drove Mark Twain and his family—his wife Livy and their two remaining daughters, Clara and Jean—from England to Switzerland to Vienna, where they settled for nearly two years. Clara had come to study piano and voice with distinguished Viennese teachers; Jean was being treated, intermittently and inconclusively, for epilepsy.

But Mark Twain was there, willy-nilly, as Mark Twain abroad—which could only mean Mark Twain celebrated and lionized. Vienna was a brilliant magnet for composers and concert artists, for playwrights and satirists, for vivid promoters of liberal and avant-garde ideas. Mark Twain was courted by Hapsburg aristocrats—countesses and duchesses—and by diplomats and journalists and dramatists. He spoke at pacifist rallies and collaborated in the writing of a pair of plays urging women's suffrage (they never reached the stage and the manuscripts have not survived). He obliged this or that charity by giving public readings; one of them, in February 1898, was attended by Dr. Sigmund Freud. Set within resplendent architecture and statuary, the intellectual life of the city dazzled.

There was another side to *fin-de-siècle* Vienna: its underside. Vienna was (then and later) notoriously, stingingly, passionately anti-Semitic. The familiar impulses that jubilantly welcomed Hitler's *Anschluss* in 1938, and defiantly elected Kurt Waldheim, a former Nazi, as president of Austria in 1986, were acted upon with equal vigor (and venom) in 1898, when the demagogue Karl Lueger held office as Vienna's popular mayor; and Lueger was a preparatory template for the Nazi politics that burgeoned in Vienna only two-and-a-half decades on. In Mark Twain's Vienna, the cultural elite included prominent Jewish musicians and writers, among whom he flourished companionably; his daughter Clara married Ossip Gabrilowitsch, a Russian-Jewish composer-pianist and fellow music student. These warm Viennese associations did not escape the noisome anti-Semitic press, which vulgarly denounced Mark Twain either as a Jew-lover or as himself a secret Jew.

In 1898, the European press in general—whether in Paris or Brussels or Berlin or Vienna or even Moscow—was inflamed by an international controversy: the fever of the Dreyfus Affair was erupting well beyond France itself, where Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer, had been falsely incriminated on a charge of treason. Polity after polity was split between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards; and in Vienna, Mark Twain

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boldly stood for Dreyfus's innocence. In 1898, the French novelist Emile Zola published his great *J'Accuse,* and escaped arrest by fleeing to England. It was the year of a vast European poisoning, by insidious sloganeering and hideous posters and caricatures; no single country went unsullied.

And it was in this atmosphere that Mark Twain sat down to write "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg"—a story about a town in which moral poisoning widens and widens, until no single person remains unsullied. No one can claim that the Dreyfus Affair, a conspiracy to entrap the innocent, impinged explicitly on Mark Twain's tale of a citizenry brought down by revenge and spreading greed. But the notion of a society—even one in microcosm, like Hadleyburg—sliding deeper and deeper (and individual by individual) into ethical perversion and contamination was not far from a portrait of a Europe undergoing the contagion of its great communal lie. The commanding theme of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" is contagion; and also the smugness that arises out of self-righteousness, however rooted in lie it may be.

Hadleyburg's lie is its belief in its own honesty: it has, in fact, sheltered itself against the possibility of corruption, teaching "the principles of honest dealing to its babies in the cradle," and insulating its young people from temptation, "so that their honesty could have every chance to harden and solidify, and become a part of their very bone." Yet the absence of temptation is commonly no more than the absence of a testing occasion, and when temptation finally does come to Hadleyburg, no citizen, despite stringent prior training, can withstand it. Dishonest money-lust creeps over the town, first infiltrating a respectable old couple, then moving from household to household of nineteen of the town's most esteemed worthies.

An archetypal narrative, it goes without saying: the devil tempting the seemingly pure, who turn out to be as flawed as the ordinary human article usually is. The Faustian bargain trades innocence for gold.

A FIRST reading of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg"—i.e., a first reading now, nearly a century after its composition—is apt to disappoint through overfamiliarity. It is not that familiarity lessens art; not in the least; more often it intensifies art. The experience of one *Hamlet* augments a second and a third, and this is as true of *Iolanthe* as it is of Shakespeare; but surely we do not go to *Hamlet* or *Iolanthe* for the *plot.* In the last several decades Hadleyburg, as the avatar of a corrupted town, has reappeared in short stories by Shirley Jackson ("The Lottery") and I.B. Singer ("The Gentleman from Cracow"), and in *The Visit,* a chilling drama by Friedrich Dürrenmatt.

And not only through such literary means: in the hundred years since Mark Twain invented Hadleyburg, a proliferation of story-appliances (radio, film, television, and video-recorders), spilling out scores of Hadleyburgs, has acquainted us with (and doubtless hardened us against) the stealthy despoliation of an idyllic town by a cunning stranger. Hadleyburg, for us, is largely a cinematic cliché worn down, by now, to a parody of itself; nor do we have any defense against our belatedness (to use a critical term made famous by Harold Bloom).

But all that applies only to a first reading, when what will stand out is, mainly, the lineaments of the narrative itself. Behind the recognizable Faustian frame are two unlikely categories of ingenuity. The first touches on the identity of the tempter. Hadleyburg, we are told, "had the ill luck to offend a passing stranger . . . a bitter man and vengeful."

> All through his wanderings during a whole year he kept his injury in mind, and gave all his leisure moments to trying to invent a compensating satisfaction for it. He contrived many plans, and all of them were good, but none of them was quite sweeping enough; the poorest of them would hurt a great many individuals, but what he wanted was a plan which would comprehend the entire town, and not let so much as one person escape unhurt. At last he had a fortunate idea, and when it fell into his brain it lit up his whole head with an evil joy.

We know no more than this about the injured stranger and never will know more. There is no shred of a hint concerning the nature of the offense, or exactly who committed it. This forcefully suggests the demiurge, who hates the human race simply for its independent existence, especially when that existence is embroidered by moral striving; the devil requires no motive. And as the powerful sovereign of a great and greatly populated kingdom, he has no need of revenge. The demiurge's first and last urge is gluttony—the lust to fatten his kingdom with more and more souls. Vengeance is clearly a human trait, not the devil's; so we may conclude that the "passing stranger" is, in truth, no different in kind from any indigenous citizen of Hadleyburg, and that the vengeful outlander and the honest native are, in potential and surely in outcome, identical.

And, indeed, at the end of the day, when Hadleyburg has been fully corrupted, there is nothing to choose between the "evil joy" of the schemer and the greedy dreams of the townsfolk who scheme to enrich themselves through lies. The contest is not between the devil and man, but between man and man. And it is not so much a contest as a confluence. In other words, we may be induced to imagine that all the citizens of Hadleyburg are "passing strangers": strangers to themselves. They have believed that they are one

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thing—pure hearts burnished and enameled by honesty—and they learn that they are another thing: corruptible, degraded, profoundly exposed.

Then is the corrupter of Hadleyburg *not* the devil? And if he is not, is there, after all, no Faustian frame? Is what we have, instead, the textual equivalent of the sort of optical illusion that permits you to perceive, with unqualified clarity, two different pictures, but never at the same instant? Nearly everyone has experienced the elusive vase that suddenly shows itself as a pair of silhouettes, and the maddening human profiles that unaccountably flash out of sight to reveal a vase. Is *this* the conceptual design of Mark Twain's narrative? That the outline of the corrupter is inseparable from the outline of the corrupted—that they are one and the same, ineluctably and horribly fused—but that our gaze is barred from absorbing their metaphorical simultaneity? A far more subtle invention than the Faustian scaffold on which this tale has always been said to depend.

On the other hand, Hadleyburg's tempter (whether or not he is intended to be a Mephistophelian emblem) *does* have a palpable identity of another kind—one we can easily grasp; and this is Mark Twain's second category of ingenuity. The stranger is a man who relishes the manipulation of words: certain phrases must be reproduced, and they must be precisely the right phrases, every syllable perfected.

When a sack is deposited at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Richards, an explanatory note is attached. The note is far from brief; it has a plot, a trajectory, a climactic purpose; it promises as much as the opening of a fairy tale. The sack, it claims, "contains gold coin weighing a hundred and sixty pounds four ounces," and should be given as a reward of gratitude to the unknown Hadleyburg citizen who long ago unwittingly earned it. The sack's donor was once a gambler who was spurred to reform because a man of the town gave him twenty dollars and spoke a sentence that "saved the remnant of my morals." That man, the schemer's note continues—and we have understood from the beginning that all this is a spurious concoction—that man "can be identified by the remark he made to me; I feel persuaded that he will remember it."

This is a story, then, that hangs on a set of words—fictitious, invented words—and as the narrative flies on with increasing complexity, devising painful joke after painful joke, it soon becomes clear that "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" is less about gold than it is about language. A sentence that is *almost* "correct" but contains a vagrant "very" is deemed fraudulent; eventually all versions of the elusive remark fall under a cloud of fraudulence, and threaten the town, and expose its infamous heart. And ultimately even hard gold coin is converted into language, in the form of written checks. It is language itself, even language subjected to comedy, that is revealed as the danger, as a conduit to greed, as an entangler in shame and sin and derision.

Which probably does return us to the devil. And why not? Mark Twain, early and late, is always preoccupied with the devil and his precincts: the devil is certainly the hero of *The Mysterious Stranger* (a work that is also a product of Vienna), where he is a grand imaginer who appears under the name of Dream, though his dreams are human nightmares, and his poetry destroys. In this view (and who will separate it from Mark Twain's metaphysical laughter?), the devil is a writer, and the corrupter of Hadleyburg a soulless figure who comprehends that words can carry more horror, and spread more evil joy, than any number of coveted treasures in a sack: even in the saving light of ridicule.

And if we are returned to the devil and his precincts, we are also returned to Vienna. Under the purposefully ambiguous title "Stirring Times in Vienna," Mark Twain published in *Harper's*, in the latter part of 1897, four pieces of journalism reporting on sessions of the parliament of the Hapsburg empire, then known as Austria-Hungary—a political amalgam of nineteen national enclaves that endured for 51 years until its dissolution after World War I.

The Austrian parliament, situated in Vienna, and conducted in German (the empire's official language), is, in Mark Twain's rendering, a nonhomogeneous Hadleyburg corrupted well past mere greed into the contagion of chaos and contumely. The Hadleyburg townsfolk are uniformly named Richards and Burgess and Goodson and Wilson and Billson; and yet their interests conflict as if they held nothing in common. In the Austrian parliament it is certain that nothing is held in common: the native languages of the members are Polish, Czech, Romanian, Hungarian, Italian, German, etc., and the motley names correspond to their speakers' origins.

What is at issue, in December of 1897, is a language dispute. The Bohemians are demanding that Czech replace German as Bohemia's official language; the government (i.e., the majority party) has acceded. But the German-speaking Austrians, who comprise only one-fourth of the empire's entire population, are enraged, and are determined to prevent the government from pursuing all other business—including the ratification of the indispensable *Ausgleich*, the renewable treaty of confederation linking Austria and Hungary—unless and until German is restored in Bohemia.

The analogy with Hadleyburg is not gratuitous. Here again the crux is language. In Hadleyburg there are nineteen worthies complicit in the turmoil of communal shame; in the Austrian parlia-

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ment there are nineteen states. And just as the nineteen leading citizens of Hadleyburg furiously compete, so, as Mark Twain reports it in *Harper's*, do the Austrian parliamentarians: "Broadly speaking, all the nations in the empire hate the government—but they all hate each other too, and with devoted and enthusiastic bitterness; no two of them can combine; the nation that rises must rise alone." And if we can recognize in Hadleyburg the dissolving Austria-Hungary of the 1890's, we can surely also recognize the disintegrated components of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990's. Hadleyburg may be emblematic of the imperial parliament in Vienna seventeen years before the outbreak of war in Sarajevo in 1914; even more inescapably, it presages the *fin-de-siècle* Sarajevo of our own moment.

Yet there is a difference—of reportage—between Mark Twain's Vienna and contemporary Bosnia that turns out to be not quite what we would expect. In a century-old photograph showing the exterior of the parliament, the buildings appear to stretch over three or four city blocks, with all the majesty of a row of imperial palaces. Another photograph, of the interior—"its paneled sweep relieved by fluted columns of distinguished grace and dignity, which glow softly and frostily in the electric light"—offers a mob of unruly screamers, a good number of them clubbing their desks with wooden planks. The photographs are necessarily static and silent; and we might be induced to feel technologically superior in a news-gathering way to a generation that perforce had to do without CNN or Court TV. Vienna in 1897 had only Mark Twain; yet imagination confirms which medium overpowers (or, as we are wont to put it, "outperforms") which. What TV anchor, accompanied by what "brilliant camerawork," can match this introspective portrait of the parliament's Polish president?

> He is a gray-haired, long, slender man, with a colorless long face, which, in repose, suggests a death-mask; but when not in repose is tossed and rippled by a turbulent smile which washes this way and that, and is not easy to keep up with—a pious smile, a beseeching and supplicating smile; and when it is at work the large mouth opens, and the flexible lips crumple, and unfold, and crumple again, and move around in a genial and persuasive and angelic way, and expose large glimpses of teeth; and that interrupts the sacredness of the smile and gives it momentarily a mixed worldly and political and satanic cast.

As for the rest of the assembly, they are "religious men, they are earnest, sincere, devoted, and they hate the Jews."

MARK TWAIN's dispatches reached New York without tampering. The imperial press was subject to a heavy and capricious censorship; so it is possible that the readers of *Harper's* were more intimately informed of the degradation of an allegedly democratic parliament than the citizens of Austria or of its eighteen co-equal provinces.

The tactics of the opposition—i.e., of the Germans who refuse to allow the Czechs their own tongue—begin reasonably enough, in parliamentary fashion, with a heroic one-man filibuster lasting twelve hours. At the speaker's first words, however, decorum instantly and repeatedly gives way to yells, the beating of desks with long boards, and the clamor of threats and name-calling astonishingly gutter-bred. (The members of the assembly include princes, counts, barons, priests, lawyers, judges, physicians, professors, merchants, bankers—and also "that distinguished religious expert, Dr. Lueger, Bürgermeister of Vienna.")

A number of these shouted declarations vibrate with a dread familiarity, as if a recording of the sounds of the Vienna of 1938 are somehow being hurled back into that earlier time, 40 years before: "The Germans of Austria will neither surrender nor die!" "It's a pity that such a man [one willing to grant language rights to the Czechs] should be a leader of the Germans; he disgraces the German name!" "And *these* shameless creatures are the leaders of the German People's party!" "You Jew, you!" "I would rather take my hat off to a Jew!" "Jew flunky! Here we have been fighting the Jews for ten years and now you are helping them to power again. How much do you get for it?" "You Judas!" "Schmeel Leeb Kohn! Schmeel Leeb Kohn!"

But let us not misrepresent by overselection. Tainting their opponents with "Jew" may be the most scurrilous offense these princes, counts, barons, priests, judges, etc., can settle on, but it is not the most imaginative. There are also the following: "Brothel-knight!" "East German offal-tub!" "Infamous louse-brat!" "Cowardly blatherskite!"—along with such lesser epithets as "Polish dog," "miserable cur," and "*Die Grossmutter auf dem Misthaufen erzeugt worden*" (which Mark Twain declines to translate from the original).

In short: a parliamentary riot that is soon to turn into street riots. The fourth and last dispatch records the arrival of the militia:

> And now we see what history will be talking of five centuries hence: a uniformed and helmeted battalion of bronzed and stalwart men marching in double file down the floor of the House—a free parliament profaned by an invasion of brute force! . . . They ascended the steps of the tribune, laid their hands upon the inviolable persons of the representatives of a nation, and dragged and tugged and hauled them down the steps and out at the door.

"The memory of it," Mark Twain concludes—and by now all satire is drained away—"will outlast all the thrones that exist today. In the whole history of free parliaments the like of it had been seen

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but three times before. It takes its imposing place among the world's unforgettable things."

He is both wrong and right. Wrong, because the December 1897 parliamentary upheaval in Vienna is of course entirely forgotten, except by historian-specialists and readers of Mark Twain's least-known prose. And right, because it is an indelible precursor that not merely portends the profoundly unforgettable Viennese mob events of 1938, but thrusts them into our teeth with all their bitter 20th-century flavor. Here is no *déjà vu*, but its prophesying opposite. Or, to say it otherwise: a twenty-year-old rioter enjoying Mark Twain's Vienna easily becomes a sixty-year-old Nazi enjoying *Anschluss* Vienna.

In the immediate wake of the introduction of the militia into the parliament, the government

> came down with a crash; there was a popular outbreak or two in Vienna; there were three or four days of furious rioting in Prague, followed by the establishing there of martial law; the Jews [who were by and large German-speaking] and Germans were harried and plundered, and their houses destroyed; in other Bohemian towns there was rioting—in some cases the Germans being the rioters, in others the Czechs—and in all cases the Jew had to roast, no matter which side he was on.

All this was in progress while Europe continued to boil over Dreyfus. Living on top of the fire, so to speak, Mark Twain could hardly overlook the roasting Jews. Consequently, a few months after his parliamentary reports, he published in *Harper's*, in March 1898, a kind of sequel to "Stirring Times in Vienna"—a meditation entitled "Concerning the Jews." Part polemic, part reprimand, part self-contradictory panegyric, the essay was honorably motivated but ultimately obtuse and harmful. The London *Jewish Chronicle*, for example, commented at the time: "Of all such advocates, we can but say 'Heaven save us from our friends.'" (In the United States in the 1930's, pro-Nazi groups and other anti-Semites seized on portions of the essay to suggest an all-American signature for the promulgation of hate.)

Mark Twain was not unaware that Sholem Aleichem, the classic Yiddish writer, was affectionately called "the Jewish Mark Twain." This was because Sholem Aleichem, like his American counterpart, was a bittersweet humorist and a transcendent humanist; and also because he reflected his village Jews, sunk in deepest poverty, as intimately and faithfully as Mark Twain recorded the homespun villages of his American South. Both men were better known by their pen names than by their actual names; both stood for liberty of the oppressed; both were eagerly read by the plain people—the "folk"; and both were nearly unprecedented as popular literary heroes.

Sholem Aleichem certainly read Mark Twain (possibly in German translation), but it is hardly likely that Mark Twain read Sholem Aleichem. Even the smallest inkling of Sholem Aleichem's social content would have stood in the way of the central canard of "Concerning the Jews." And to contradict that canard, and to determine the real and typical condition of the *shtetl*-bound mass of European Jews, Mark Twain had only to look over his shoulder at those Jewish populations nearest to hand in Austro-Hungarian Galicia. Instead, he looked to the old hostile myths.

To be sure, "Concerning the Jews" is remembered (perhaps mainly by those who have never read it) as charmingly philo-Semitic. A single witty—and famous—sentence supports that view: "All that I care to know is that a man is a human being—that is enough for me; he can't be any worse." And we can believe Mark Twain—we do believe him—when he avers that he makes "no uncourteous reference" to Jews in his books "because the disposition is lacking."

Up to a point the disposition *is* lacking; there is plenty of evidence for that. A curious science-fiction sketch called "From the 'London Times' of 1904"—written about the same time as "Concerning the Jews," and striking for its "invention" of the "telectrophonoscope," or television—turns out to be a lampoon of "French justice" as exemplified in the punishment of the innocent Dreyfus; and if a savage satire can be felt to be delectable, this one is.

The disposition is lacking in other, less political, directions as well. Jewish charitableness, Jewish generosity, Jewish responsibility are all acknowledged—for the moment. The facts, Mark Twain declares,

> are all on the credit side of the proposition that the Jew is a good and orderly citizen. Summed up, they certify that he is quiet, peaceable, industrious, unaddicted to high crime and brutal dispositions; that his family life is commendable; that he is not a burden upon public charities; that he is not a beggar; that in benevolence he is above the reach of competition. These are the very quintessentials of good citizenship.

And all this is followed by another accolade: the Jew is honest. The proof of it is that the "basis of successful business is honesty; a business cannot thrive where the parties to it cannot trust each other." Who will not affirm this generality? Now add to the assertion of Jewish honesty this quip about the "Jewish brain" from a letter to an American friend, written from Vienna in 1897: "The difference between the brain of the average Christian and that of the average Jew . . . is about the difference between a tadpole's and an Archbishop's."

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We may laugh at this, but let liberal laughter be on its guard: the Jew, the essay continues,

> has a reputation for various small forms of cheating . . . and for arranging cunning contracts which leave him an exit but lock the other man in, and for smart evasions which find him safe and comfortable just within the strict letter of the law, when court and jury know very well that he has violated the spirit of it.

From none of this does Mark Twain dissent. So much for his honest Jewish businessman. And so much for praise of the "Jewish brain," which takes us straightway to "cunning contracts" and "smart evasions" and the old, old supersessionist proposition that Judaism attends to the "letter" and not to the "spirit."

Still, the overriding engine of this essay is situated in a much larger proposition. "In all countries," Mark Twain tells us, "from the dawn of history, the Jew has been persistently and implacably hated, and with frequency persecuted." From the dawn of history? And if so, why? Not because the Jew has been millennially blamed for the crucifixion; "the reasons for it are older than that event," and reside entirely in the Jew's putative economic prowess; theology does not apply; at least the Gospels and Pauline and Augustinian traditions do not apply. Skip the crucifixion, then; penetrate even more deeply behind the veil, into those still earlier mists of prehistory, and let the fault land on Joseph in Egypt—Joseph the provider, "who took a nation's money all away, to the last penny."

There is your model for "the Jew"! "I am convinced," Mark Twain insists, "that the persecution of the Jew is not due in any large degree to religious prejudice." And here is his judgment of the root of the matter:

> No, the Jew is a money-getter; and in getting his money he is a very serious obstruction to less capable neighbors who are on the same quest. . . . In estimating worldly values the Jew is not shallow, but deep. With precocious wisdom he found out in the morning of time that some men worship rank, some worship heroes, some worship power, some worship God, and that over these ideals they dispute and cannot unite—but that they all worship money; so he made it the end and aim of his life to get it. He was at it in Egypt 36 centuries ago; he was at it in Rome . . . ; he has been at it ever since. The cost to him has been heavy; his success has made the whole human race his enemy—but it has paid, for it has brought him envy, and that is the only thing which men will sell both soul and body for.

READING this, who can help thinking that all of it could go down quite nicely in the Austrian parliament of late 1897, not to mention the Viennese street? There is enough irony here to make even the devil weep. The truth is that Mark Twain was writing of Jews as "money-getters" at a time when the mass emigration of poor Jews by the hundreds of thousands had already begun to cram the steerage compartments of transoceanic ships—Jews in flight from economic hopelessness; and when the meanest penury was the lot of most Jews; and when Jewish letters and Jewish lore and Jewish wit took "poor" to be synonymous with "Jew." And here comes Mark Twain, announcing that the Jew's "commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk."

He might have taken in the anguished testimony of Sholem Aleichem's Jews; or the deprivations of Galician Jews down the road, so to speak, from Vienna; or the travail of Russian Jews penned into the Pale of Settlement. Or, in his native land, he might have taken in the real status of all those small storekeepers whose names he notes on their shop signs (Edelstein, Blumenthal, Rosenzweig), while observing that "commercial importance" means railroads, banks, mining, insurance, steel, shipping, real estate, etc., etc.—industries where he would have been hard put to find a single Jew.

As it happens, he took in almost none of it; and, though eschewing theology, let himself be taken in by an ancient theological canard: the legacy, via the Judas legend, of the Jew's affinity for money—the myth of the Rich Jew, the Jew Usurer. The very use of the generic phrase "the Jew" suggests stigma. Mythology, it develops, is the heart and muscle of Mark Twain's reputedly "philo-Semitic" essay—the old myths trotted out for an airing in the American idiom.

He said he lacked the disposition for slander. It would be wrong to dismiss this statement; but perhaps it would be fairer to suppose that he lacked the disposition for disciplined caution. He knew nothing of Jewish literary or jurisprudential civilization, or of the oceanic intellectual traditions of Jewish biblical commentary; he approached the Joseph tale with the crudity of a belligerent village atheist, and employed it to defame on economic grounds exactly as the charge of deicide defamed on theological grounds.

Yet he was surely capable of renouncing a canard when someone helped him to prise out the truth. The Jew, he had written, "is charged with an unpatriotic disinclination to stand by the flag as a soldier." "You feed on a country," he accused, "but you don't like to fight for it." Nevertheless there is appended, at the end of this essay, a remarkable Postscript: "The Jew as Soldier," wherein instance after historical instance of Jewish "fidelity" and "gallant soldiership" is cited—in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and especially the Civil War. It is not the admission of canard that is remarkable, but rather the principle drawn from it: "It is not

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allowable to endorse wandering maxims upon supposition."

That, overall, and despite its contrary motivation, is a precise characterization of "Concerning the Jews"—the endorsement of wandering maxims upon supposition. Only compare George Eliot's "The Modern Hep Hep"—a chapter in her *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, published just twenty years before Mark Twain's wandering maxims—to see what a generalized essay concerning the Jews, engaging Mark Twain's own questions, might attain to.

MARK TWAIN's twenty months of residence in Vienna were among his most prolific. The fifteen short works collected in the 1900 edition of *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories and Essays* are a fraction of his output during this period; but they reflect the entire arsenal of his art: the occasionally reckless polemic, the derisive irony, the intelligent laughter, the verbal stilettos, the blunt country humor, the fervent despair, the hidden jeer, the relishing of palaver and tall tale, the impatient worldliness, the brilliant forays of language—sometimes for purposes of search-and-destroy, sometimes for a show of pure amazement, sometimes for plain delight in the glory of human oddness, most often for storytelling's fragile might. Nothing is too trivial, nothing too weighty.

And frequently the trivial and the weighty are enmeshed, as in Hadleyburg, when the recitation of a handful of words touches on depths of deceit. Or as in a lightly turned sketch in the same collection—"My Boyhood Dreams"—that teases such eminences as William Dean Howells and John Hay (U.S. Secretary of State in 1898) for their failure to fulfill their respective childhood ambitions—steamboat mate and auctioneer; never mind that these "ambitions" are wholly of Mark Twain's antic invention. But even so playful an oddment as this begins with a bitter reference to the humiliated Dreyfus.

In fact, aboard Mark Twain's prose you cannot very long rely on the "lightly turned"—whatever sets out with an elfin twitch of the nostrils or a Mona Lisa half-smile is likely to end in prophetic thunder. "My First Lie, and How I Got Out of It" starts off with a diaper pin and a twinkle, but its real theme is indifference to injustice—"the silent assertion that there wasn't anything going on in which humane and intelligent people were interested." From slaveholding to Dreyfus is but a paragraph's leap: "From the beginning of the Dreyfus case to the end of it all France . . . lay under the smother of the silent-assertion lie that no wrong was being done to a persecuted and unoffending man." And from Dreyfus how far is it to the "silent National Lie," "whole races and peoples conspir[ing] to propagate gigantic mute lies in the interest of tyrannies and sham"? Beware Mark Twain when his subject looks most severely simple or mild-manneredly innocent: you may speedily find yourself aflame in a fiery furnace of moral indignation.

Sketches, fables, diatribes. Eight months before his death in 1910 he wrote, "I am full of malice, saturated with malignity." More than two decades earlier, he had exclaimed to Howells that his was "a pen warmed up in hell." Yet—with relative benignity—the remainder of this volume treats of artists who are ignored while alive and valued only posthumously ("Is He Living or Is He Dead?"); of a train companion determined to set right every minor annoyance ("Traveling with a Reformer"); and of a celebrated inventor ordered by the Austrian government to teach grade school ("The Austrian Edison Keeping School Again").

But that is scarcely the finish of it—there are other exuberances. "The Private History of the 'Jumping Frog' Story" not only supplies an ancient Greek version of the joke, but bursts into a spoof of word-for-word translation from the French. "How to Tell a Story" is reminiscent of nighttime ghost-scares at summer camp, while "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance"—an unrestrained comic lecture on the relative nature of wealth—would hardly pass muster in a contemporary multiculturalist classroom. "About Play-Acting" compares a serious drama in Vienna with the frivolous offerings cut from the New York theater advertisements of Saturday, May 7, 1898; Broadway at this hour (despite spectacular technical advances) is not a whit more substantive or sophisticated. "At the Appetite Cure," with its praise of starvation as the key to health, reflects Mark Twain's own belief in the curative virtues of abstinence from food—a crank piece; but here the jokes are crude and cruel, with a Teutonic edge of near-sadism.

All the same, the most stirring—the most startling—real-life narrative in this volume, "My Debut as a Literary Person," concerns starvation: in extremis, at sea, in a small boat, after a shipwreck. Mark Twain defines it in a minor way as a journalistic scoop, but for power, passion, character, and suspense, it belongs among his masterworks.

All these romances—some as slight as skits, and one as rich and urgent as a novel—were set down in Mark Twain's Vienna: a cosmopolis driven by early modernism, saturated in music and theater, populated by gargantuan cultural figures whose influence still shakes the world (Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl, to mention only these), ruled by rogues (two of Hitler's idols among them), on occasion ruled by mobs; a society gaudily brilliant, acutely civilized, triumphantly flourishing, and also shameless, brutal. Part heaven, part the devil's precinct. An odd backdrop for a writer reared in Hannibal, Missouri. But in Vienna Mark Twain was close to the peak of what he called his "malignity," and Vienna served him.

Along with Dreyfus in Paris, it gave him a pen warmed up in the local hell.

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What's Left of Liberalism

David Brooks

I HAVE on my shelf a book that bears the subtitle, "The Failure of American Liberalism." A collection of essays and documents aimed at redefining and rescuing a creed, this book, whose main title is *The Great Society Reader*, was published in 1967.

American liberals, then, have been recovering from the Failure of American Liberalism for quite some time now. In 1969, the political scientist Theodore Lowi declared "The End of Liberalism" (he meant that it was being replaced by technocracy). During the 1970's or 80's, a publisher's list might have included, in the fall, a redefinition by Robert Lekachman, and then two more in the spring by Robert Kuttner or Michael Harrington under titles like *The New Liberalism* or *The Next Left*. In 1983, Amory Lovins, Theodore Roszak, Richard J. Barnet, and others contributed to a collection called *Rethinking Liberalism*.

Robert Reich, now Bill Clinton's Secretary of Labor, made something of a career in the 80's out of successive redefinitions of liberalism, going through at least four. First (as Mickey Kaus has pointed out), he fought for a vision that emphasized the utility of engineers (wealth generators) against the plague of lawyers and accountants (wealth rearrangers). Then he became a guru of industrial policy, developing an enthusiasm for "flexible production" which was to replace mass production. Next, he pushed the envelope of neoliberalism by embracing the idea of a borderless world. Finally, as Secretary of Labor, he has reverted to paleoliberalism, advocating hikes in the minimum wage. In line with all these rethinkings, Reich and others have offered us a succession of models: Japanese industrial policy, the German social contract, the Swedish nanny state, technopolitics (Gary Hart), managerial Dukakisism, protectionist populism, and so on.

Each electoral setback for liberalism has brought another round of redefinition, and yet each redefining has left liberalism somehow less palatable to the voters than the last one—but even this has not stopped the redefiners, who, in the wake of last November's elections, have more work to do than ever. "Let's be clear about it," read a panel spread across the cover of the post-election issue of the *Village Voice*:

> The Left, whatever exactly it currently is, is finished. Murdered. Tuesday's returns were the final referendum on the liberal-Left agenda that paid too much attention to its tiny narcissisms and too little to the needs of most Americans.

Inside, the *Voice* published eight essays designed to get the redefining started.

OVER at the *New Republic*, a recent defector from conservatism and a newly minted liberal, Michael Lind, was uncharacteristically happy: "The crushing defeat of the Democrats creates the best opportunity in a quarter-century for liberalism," he wrote, opening a redefinition attempt of his own that favored old-fashioned class warfare. The *Nation* seized the opportunity to bash the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. And at the *American Prospect*, the rethinking was equally fast and furious.

Make no mistake: redefining liberalism, which to some might seem a dreary and thankless chore, to others makes for delightful work, putting authors—as opposed to politicians, lobbyists, or party hacks—at the center of things. It is challenging work, too: recasting an ideology is as close to social engineering as a political writer is likely to get. And it is deeply congruent with the rationalist spirit at the heart of modern liberalism. For in all these efforts, liberalism is treated as an institution, along the lines of the health-care system or urban mass transit, and it is deemed to be broken. Therefore, a conscious planning effort is needed to repair it. There is something fitting and appropriate in the spectacle of liberals now inflicting on their own belief system the same set of mental attitudes they have inflicted on so many social institutions.

Yet none of it works, of course. The redefinition exercises are mere repackaging, or at best, more like laying sod than planting seeds. The trouble is that 30 years of shuffling have blurred the creed, so that liberalism now resembles a person who has undergone 27 face-lifts; the natural contours have disappeared. A leftist single-issue movement like feminism may remain cohesive and even vibrant, but mainstream liberalism—the kind that exists in national and local politics as opposed to university campuses—has become vaporous. There are no deep channels of energy.

The Clinton administration's inability to define a clear policy direction is only the most obvious example of this state of affairs. Forests have been sacrificed to explain the adminstration's failure. Joe Klein of *Newsweek* has labeled the problem one of policy promiscuity, tying it to the President's sexual reputation. David Maraniss of the *Washington Post* also favors

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a psychological explanation, arguing for a connection between Clinton's inconstant intelligence and his restless empathy.

But the administration's problems are deeper than the problems of one man, as can be seen by a glance at the situation among conservatives. Newt Gingrich's mind may be as peripatetic as Clinton's—probably more so. But Gingrich is heir to a relatively cohesive movement. For conservatives there are definite guiding stars—Adam Smith to Ronald Reagan, figures that can be worn on neckties. The important questions of direction have been settled, the important policy goals—privatization, lower taxes, individual responsibility—are consecrated. The Contract With America itself is the product of decades of policy meetings, books, articles, and lobbying. Even when conservatives differ over items in the Contract, there is built into the movement a sense of solidarity with the effort as a whole.

For liberals, by contrast, endless redefinition has erased any sense that certain issues are settled, that certain guiding policies are constant. Every time President Clinton delivers a major speech, he is urged to redefine his core. After a dozen or so such attempts, the President winds up with something like this year's State of the Union address, a long and incoherent encyclopedia of nostrums.

ANOTHER consequence of perpetual redefinition is that liberalism has become plagued by self-consciousness, and is therefore increasingly divorced from the immediate concerns of people who do not spend their lives trying to redefine liberalism—in other words, most people. Worse: liberals, including those in the administration, now push a hodgepodge of reforms that do not engage the passions even of liberals themselves. Indeed, we have now seen the emergence of a whole new group of people who consider themselves liberal but are not emotionally committed to liberal policies.

The emergence of this group is noticeable, for example, at the *New York Times*. In the heyday of liberalism, important liberal voices at the *Times* included columnists like James Reston, Tom Wicker, Flora Lewis, and Anthony Lewis. Today, the dominant liberal voices belong to the former theater critic Frank Rich, Anna Quindlen (until recently), and soon Maureen Dowd.

What we have here is a tremendous change of sensibility. The former group may have been dull, but they were also serious, and seriously committed to liberal policies. The latter are more interesting to read, but lack political gravity. Far from being associated with a political program, they seem bored by the substance of politics, whether foreign-policy doctrine, fiscal policy, or domestic-policy initiatives. Their judgments, instead, are aesthetic and cultural—and frequently *ad hominem*.

If, for example, the big political debate of the moment is over the proper size and role of government, it is a debate that Frank Rich sits out, focusing instead on whether or not the conservative writer David Brock, the author of *The Real Anita Hill*, likes women. The baby-boomer liberals do of course write about politics—Maureen Dowd does so brilliantly—but they seem bored by government.

THE *Times*'s new op-ed stars are not alone. It is no accident that the most popular liberal magazine of the moment is the *New Yorker*, which does not publish articles about policy but rather personality profiles that treat political figures as aesthetic objects. The runner-up in terms of liberal popularity is the *New York Times Magazine*. The *Magazine* has devoted a tremendous amount of space to the new conservative ascendancy in Washington, offering articles about Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson, Senator Phil Gramm, Senator Robert Dole, and a group of young conservatives (myself included). But in only one of these pieces, the one on Senator Dole, did the author actually discuss matters of political substance. The New Left came into being saying that everything is political; now many of its heirs and epigones treat politics as an epiphenomenon of (pop) culture.

But it is the *New Republic* that best represents a liberalism that has drifted into frivolity. Once the home of liberal redefinition, it now brings little fervor to the serious issues of the day. Recent cover stories have focused on smell (yes, smell), or on chant (the medieval variety); the shorter pieces inside, though witty enough, are almost always tangential to the larger controversies of the day. Whether or not the *New Republic*'s writers are younger than those at other magazines, the journal feels younger, perhaps because in its pages youthful mischievousness and self-absorption go largely unchecked. (Exceptions are Fred Barnes, the house conservative; Jeffrey Rosen, the legal writer; and Mickey Kaus, who still seems primarily interested in government policy.) Founded to serve the cause of liberal progressivism, the *New Republic* now pays loyalty to no larger cause; indeed, in its current manifestation, it seems to represent something of an end point.

COULD liberalism's course have been different? After all, it is a statist philosophy stuck in a period in which statism is out of favor. Naturally, then, liberals are going to lose elections, and liberal writers are going to drift away from the suddenly unrewarding world of policy.

There is something to this. But it is also true that the constant process of redefinition did actual harm. Not only did it blur the message of liberalism to the point where liberals themselves lost any sense of what it stood for, but it forced liberal strategists to focus on the wrong place. Unable to devise policies the electorate would buy, they came up instead with plans for coalitions, and only then with policies that might bring these coalitions together.

But coalitions are unplannable. Who could have foreseen the Reagan coalition: evangelicals, urban Jewish intellectuals, California

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libertarians, corporate bigwigs, Rust Belt construction workers? It is policy—that is to say, a set of real ideas translated into real programs—that counts.

The most pernicious byproduct of liberal redefinition is that it has bred a spirit of corrosive skepticism, especially strong among the neoliberals—precisely those who are most intent on modernizing and redefining. And this leads to a question: can the same thing happen to conservatives?

Perhaps it can, in due course. But at the moment, decadence does not seem imminent, if only because conservatives still pay genuine deference to ideas, and to the popular mood that supports one set of ideas as opposed to another. Political creeds have many strands. When voters pick the strand of the day, then movements prosper. When redefiners take control, it is a sign that the movement is finished.

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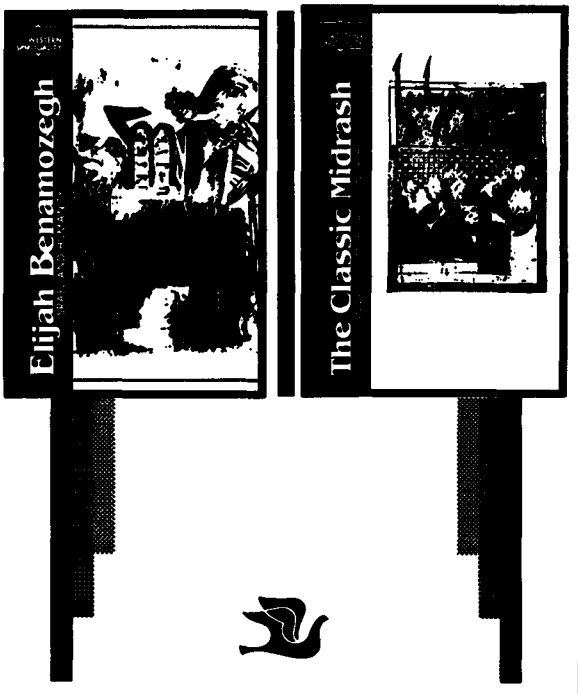

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The 19th Century & After

THE DE-MORALIZATION OF SOCIETY: FROM VICTORIAN VIRTUES TO MODERN VALUES. By GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB. *Knopf. 314 pp. $24.00.*

Reviewed by PETER L. BERGER

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB is probably the most distinguished American historian working on 19th-century England. In recent years she has also written as a critic of miscellaneous social and cultural developments in today's Western world. The present volume continues both activities. It will interest those who like to read about the last century, and those who worry about the current one.

Himmelfarb returns here to a subject she has dealt with extensively in earlier works: the moral fabric of Victorian society and the undeservedly bad press it has received from later commentators. Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918) can be seen as the prototype of the sour view of that period of English history, supposedly marked by social oppression and moral hypocrisy. As a result of such pejorative interpretations, the very term "Victorian" is still widely used today to indicate repressed sexuality, bourgeois stuffiness, and a generally retrograde world view. Himmelfarb is a "revisionist" with regard to this school of interpretation; she does not idealize the Victorians, but she insists on a balanced picture. More, she argues that there are important aspects of Victorian culture that merit our emulation.

One common opinion about Victorian society, widely shared for obvious reasons by historians on the Left, is that there were wide cleavages between middle-class and working-class culture. To the contrary, Himmelfarb argues: one of the more remarkable features of Victorian society was the commonality of moral beliefs throughout most of the population. The middle classes and the lower classes generally agreed on what constituted respectability, in the basic moral sense of behavior worthy of respect.

Similarly, Himmelfarb criticizes the notion that Victorian women were particularly oppressed—they were very active, she demonstrates, in important social and political movements, even if denied the vote and deemed properly to belong to the household rather than to the world of gainful employment. She is equally skeptical of the conventional view of profound sexual repression—the Victorians were a jollier lot than is commonly assumed. Nor, she shows, were the wealthier elements of the population callously indifferent to the sufferings of the lower orders—the Victorian age was one of ongoing reforms, virtually without exception initiated by middle-class politicians and movements often inspired by Protestant moral convictions.

On the last of these points, Himmelfarb returns to an argument that she has advanced repeatedly before. The Victorians, she shows, drew a distinction between the poor and "paupers." The former were considered "deserving" of benevolent interventions because their poverty could not be blamed on them; by contrast, the latter either had brought their misfortune on themselves by their own destructive behavior or had refused to improve their condition by giving up that behavior. Here, if nowhere else, the Victorians hold out lessons of great relevance to our current debate over the nature, the ethos, and the limits of the modern welfare state.

But above all we can learn from the Victorian understanding that society is at bottom a moral entity. That insight, not necessarily based on the specific moral ideas of the Victorians, is as true today as it was then, and indeed here the common sense of the Victorians coincides with the most sophisticated sociological theories. (One thinks especially of Emile Durkheim and his view of human society as based on a "collective conscience.") If the insight has been blurred in more recent times, that is due in part to a misunderstood social-science view of human actions, and particularly to an increasing reluctance to use moral language in thinking about social justice and the welfare state. As Himmelfarb writes, "It is this reluctance to speak the language of morality, far more than any specific values, that separates us from the Victorians."

There were, to be sure, dissenters even at the time from the class-transcending morality of Victorian society. They came to the fore with some fanfare toward the end of the era, in the notorious *fin-de-siècle.* These were the writers, artists, and intellectuals who made it their business to outrage the moral sensibilities of their contemporaries; Oscar Wilde may be regarded as their *doyen.* These people did indeed foreshadow the moral relativism of our own time. But there is an important difference that once again Himmelfarb sums up succinctly: "A century ago the 'advanced' souls were just that, well in advance of the culture, whereas now they pervade the entire culture." In other words, the de-moralizing avant-garde has become an amoral establishment.

HIMMELFARB's subtitle, "From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values," suggests the core of her critique of our post-Victorian world. "Virtues" are moral norms that are deeply held and believed to be of the very order of things. "Values" are not much different from opinions—more or less arbitrary preferences that one is not too sure about, does not know how to defend, and cer-

PETER L. BERGER *is University Professor at Boston University. His most recent book is* A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity.

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tainly cannot seek to impose on anyone else.

The shift between them is analogous to a related shift in the nature of religious adherence. Thus, there is a world of difference between saying that one is "of the Protestant confession"—a statement that implies total commitment and even a readiness for martyrdom—and saying, as is common today, that one has a Protestant "religious preference" ("preference" being a term derived from the language of consumer behavior, as in "I prefer brand A over brand B, but I might change my mind tomorrow").

Himmelfarb places much blame for the change from virtues to values on Nietzsche and Max Weber. About Weber one begs to differ: he was a messenger of moral relativism, but that was hardly his own message. And one wonders whether Nietzsche had all that much influence in Britain or in this country. Be that as it may, however, Himmelfarb is certainly right about the nature of the shift.

To be sure, there are still many people who profess taken-for-granted "virtues," just as there are people with taken-for-granted religious convictions (probably more of both kinds in America than in England). But in the elite culture, and on both sides of the North Atlantic, a relativism has invaded most of the remaining fortresses of moral and religious certitude. One does not have to be either a Victorian or a Durkheimian social theorist to find this state of affairs disturbing.

IN HER epilogue, Himmelfarb turns to present-day society, enumerating the widely-known facts of rising social pathology: crime, drugs, illegitimacy, welfare dependency. The facts are more dramatic in this country than in Britain, but the rates curve upward in very similar fashion there, too. These symptoms of decay, Himmelfarb argues convincingly, cannot be ascribed to economic recession or to mounting inequality, as analysts on the Left keep on saying. Rather, we are confronting a moral revolution, one which has so thoroughly succeeded that anyone daring to address these pathologies in moral terms is promptly accused of "blaming the victim" (one of the most obfuscating mantras invented by social scientists in recent years).

Himmelfarb gives credence to Myron Magnet's thesis (in *The Dream and the Nightmare*) that the revolution has been a dual one, occurring both in middle-class culture and in the so-called "culture of poverty"—but with greatly different consequences in the two milieus. Thus, for example, a middle-class professional woman having a child outside marriage (Murphy Brown, if you will) certainly faces problems and may put her child at some disadvantage, but there are means at hand to mitigate the consequences. By contrast, a poor woman in the same circumstance lacks those mitigating resources, whether social or financial, and the consequences both for her and for her child are likely to be disastrous. The face of today's "underclass" is the collective result of this disaster, which is rooted in a vast moral deformation (or, literally, a moral "deconstruction").

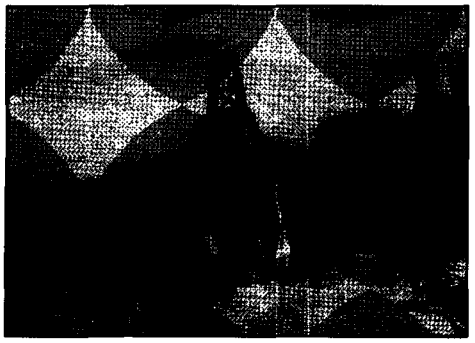
The data cited by Himmelfarb draw attention to a very intriguing fact: that the abrupt change occurs in the 1960's. In all Western societies, that one decade, roughly between 1965 and 1975, becomes the watershed. One is almost tempted to say somewhat ahistorically—Himmelfarb might not agree with this—that the Victorian age really lasted until the mid-1960's!

There is great uncertainty as to what really happened during this brief but ominous span of years. Although Himmelfarb points to the notion of a moral transformation, one must still ask what caused *that*, and why ideas voiced but not taken up widely in, say, 1865 were suddenly adopted with a vengeance by large numbers of people a hundred years later.

Whatever the answer, Himmelfarb rightly insists that it is impossible to deal with a moral crisis unless it is recognized as such. She recommends a serious rethinking

Jews and the New American Scene

Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab



Raphael Soyer, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

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of previously held positions across the political spectrum, and concludes with the modest hope that we may be ready for "a new reformation."

Gertrude Himmelfarb has long given pleasure to anyone curious about our history. Increasingly, she has been providing insight for those concerned about our own times. Her new book does both, splendidly.

Back-Door Diplomacy

BROKEN COVENANT: AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CRISIS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL. By MOSHE ARENS. *Simon & Schuster. 320 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH SHATTAN

BY NOW, the fact that George Bush came into office determined to cut Israel down to size, both figuratively and literally, is reasonably well-known. So, too, is the fact that neither he nor his Secretary of State, James Baker, was overly scrupulous in the means employed to accomplish this goal. What is far from well-known, however, is that the Bush administration worked closely with the opposition Israeli Labor party to undercut Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. This startling revelation is at the heart of *Broken Covenant*, Moshe Arens's remarkably candid book.

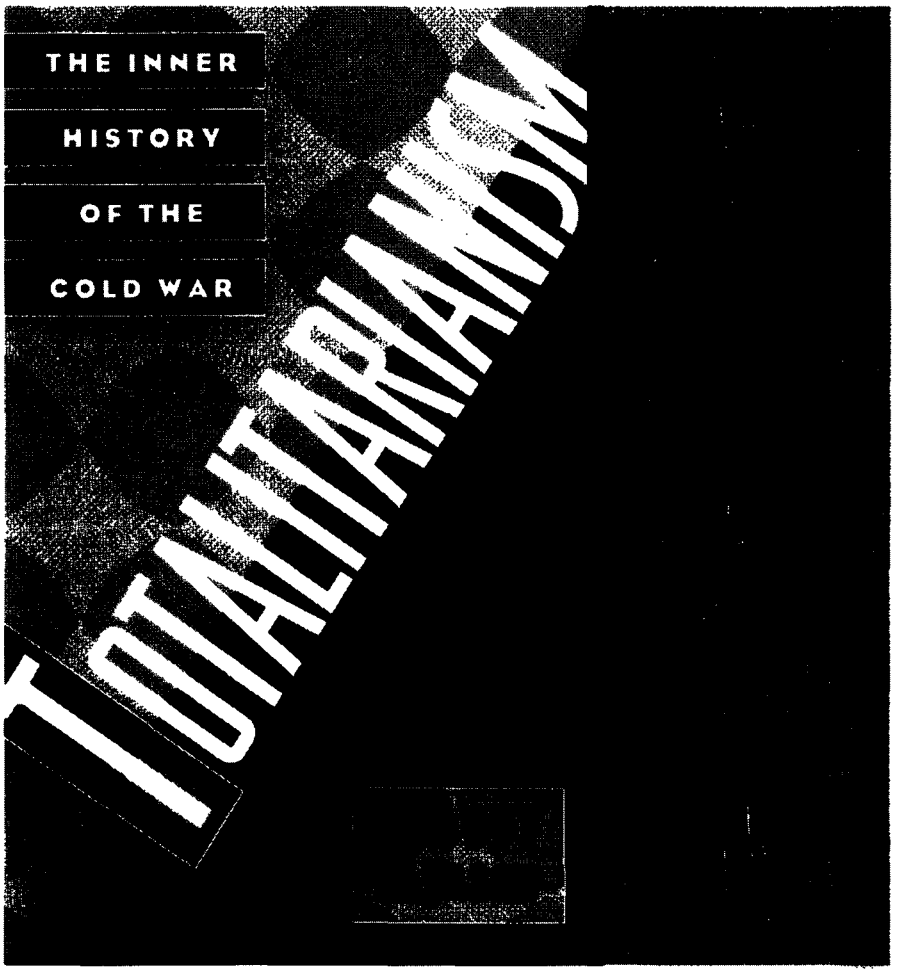
As Foreign Minister in Israel's coalition National Unity government, the Lithuanian-born, MIT-educated Arens was a key participant in the drama he describes. Among other things, he was responsible for Israel's May 1989 peace initiative, which called for democratic elections in the occupied territories as a first step toward creating limited autonomy for the Palestinians. Arens pushed hard for this initiative because he believed that—with the *intifada* raging—the status quo in the territories was incompatible with "the norms and standards by which Israeli society lives," and because he feared that the new Bush administration might endorse an international conference that would impose harsh sanctions on Israel. It was the latter consideration, according to Arens, that led a reluctant Shamir to embrace the elections plan.

Arens expected he would be in charge of the diplomatic negotiations stemming from the initiative. To his consternation, he discovered a "web of surreptitious contacts" whose purpose was to secure agreements not between the Israeli government and the Arab states but between the *Labor party* and the Arabs. Such back-channel arrangements gave Baker the opportunity to present take-it-or-leave-it proposals to Shamir that had been coordinated with Labor in advance. Labor members of the cabinet could then threaten to bring down the government if Shamir refused to go along.

At first, Arens suspected that Shimon Peres, then serving as Finance Minister, was responsible for these intrigues, so he asked then-Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, Peres's Labor colleague and perennial rival, to rein him in. It soon came to light, however, that Rabin himself was deeply involved in the furtive talks:

> Rabin had not only entered into discussions with Baker, but had entered into a secret agreement with him about the composition of the Palestinian delegation, even picking by name the Palestinians he thought should serve on it, making as sure as he could that the real nature of his visit to Washington was not revealed to Shamir or me.

Despite all this, Arens did not want to see the National Unity government dissolved. Following the wisdom of Lyndon Johnson, he felt it was better to have the opposition "inside the tent pissing out, than outside pissing in." Shamir was not persuaded. Believing it was better for Israel to address the world "in one voice, not two," he fired Peres, thereby provok-



JOSEPH SHATTAN *writes about politics and public affairs for the* American Spectator *and other publications.*

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ing the resignation of all the Labor ministers and the fall of his own government. After a good deal of unsavory bargaining (described by Arens in hilarious, eye-popping detail) Shamir succeeded in forming a new, Likud-based government.

GIVEN the deep differences between this new government and the Bush administration over how Middle East diplomacy should proceed, relations soon deteriorated sharply. Even after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and throughout the Gulf war, friction between the United States and Israel remained very intense. Arens recounts in riveting detail how, as Iraqi Scud missiles rained on Tel Aviv, the Bush administration continued putting off his increasingly urgent requests to work out a "deconflicting" mechanism that would enable Israeli warplanes to hunt for Scud launch sites in Iraq without being shot down by, or themselves forced to shoot down, friendly American jets. In the end, the war came to a close without Israel firing a shot.

After Iraq's defeat, things reached a low ebb when the United States launched a diplomatic offensive with the apparent aim of toppling the Likud government, as a first step in an ambitious plan of settling the Israeli-Arab conflict once and for all:

> The Bush administration decided to put the screws to Israel: to deny us the military aid that had been legislated, and to accuse us of illegally selling U.S. technology—poison arrows fired at Israel and directed, first and foremost, against the Likud government to show the Israeli public that no improvement should be expected in the U.S.-Israeli relationship as long as the Likud was in power.

Ultimately, Arens believes, it was this prolonged and embittered confrontation with the Bush administration that convinced Israeli voters it was time to bring Labor back—just what Baker and Bush had been hoping for all along.

Arens's description of the inner workings of the oxymoronically named National Unity government casts a disturbing light on Israeli politics, which—at least in this account—are beset with a degree of ill will, suspicion, and rancor that cannot bode well for the future. Certainly Bush and Baker found the divisions and partisanship within Israel to be a vulnerability they could easily exploit.

If Arens's account is reliable, moreover, it will require a new generation to heal the deep fissures within Israel's body politic. Leaders like Rabin and Peres, he suggests, with their roots in the labor movement, the kibbutzim, the Histadrut federation, and the pre-state Palmach defense force, consider themselves the "real" Israel, and will be forever unwilling to defer, in matters vital to Israel's security, to non-Laborites like Shamir and Arens, even if the latter happen to enjoy a mandate from the electorate. "I had no doubt," says Arens,

> that [Rabin's] arrogance stemmed from deep-seated animosities between the rival pre-state underground organizations—the Haganah and the Irgun Zvai Leumi—culminating in Ben-Gurion's order to fire on the Altalena, the Irgun ship that had brought arms and volunteers to Israel's shores in July 1948. I had always suspected that, deep down, Rabin was convinced that anybody who did not participate in this ambush should not be counted among the contributors to Israel's defense.

THOUGH Arens is outraged by what he regards as Labor's "subversive" behavior, he is even more outraged by the role of the Bush administration in encouraging Labor's behavior. Is his anger justified? Some Americans, after all, are on record as believing that the Israeli tail has for too long been wagging the American dog, with Israel pocketing billions in American aid while blithely disregarding American policy prescriptions. Those who subscribe to this point of view will hardly share Arens's fury; the Bush administration, they would argue, was right to assert itself and bring Jerusalem to heel.

Even some committed supporters of Israel within the American Jewish community were, at the time, inclined to praise the Bush administration for its policy of "tough love." For them, Bush's activist, results-oriented pursuit of negotiations with the PLO may strike a more responsive chord than Arens's still-unfashionable conviction that "Israel's security require[s] Israeli control over Judea and Samaria. . . ."

Yet even Israel's sternest critics, not to mention its friends, ought to be deeply troubled by Arens's revelations. To push Israel into making concessions, the Bush administration conducted its diplomacy not with Israel's official representatives but with the leaders of the opposition Labor party in a series of surreptitious meetings. As *Broken Covenant* shows all too clearly, such interference in the internal affairs of an ally is a betrayal of what democratic statecraft is supposedly about: respect for the sovereignty of an allied country (even when that ally is small, weak, and cantankerous); support for democratic procedures (even when they produce "intransigent" governments); and a prudent recognition that sometimes the effort to make things better, as Israel's Labor government belatedly appears to be discovering, only makes them worse.

Closing the Door

ALIEN NATION: COMMON SENSE ABOUT AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION DISASTER. By PETER BRIMELOW. *Random House. 327 pp. $24.00.*

Reviewed by PETER SKERRY

A FEW years ago I was present when a University of California vice president browbeat an unsuspecting undergraduate into silence. The offending student had innocently asked if California's

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PETER SKERRY *is a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. His* Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority *won the 1993* Los Angeles Times *Book Prize and has just been published in paperback by Harvard University Press.*

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emerging budget crisis was traceable to population pressures stemming in part from immigration. "No," the usually smooth but now ruffled administrator shot back, "there is no connection whatsoever between immigration and population growth in California, and linking the two smacks of bigotry and racism."

This exchange occurred well before Governor Pete Wilson and Proposition 187 transformed the immigration issue into a national political controversy. Today, not only would that student be less vulnerable to such treatment, he might well be brimming with confidence, particularly if he were armed and ready with arguments from *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster*, a sassy but uneven anti-immigration polemic by Peter Brimelow.

Brimelow, a senior editor at both *National Review* and *Forbes*, and an immigrant (from England) to this country himself, has been ringing alarm bells about immigration for several years. Indeed, an article he wrote in 1992 helped launch the current debate. In *Alien Nation*, Brimelow draws liberally on the work of his colleague, John O'Sullivan, *National Review*'s chief editor (another immigrant from England), who has argued that the United States is not the exception among nations that Americans like to believe it is; that Americans are bound together not only by devotion to a shared set of abstract principles but by the organic ties of language, history, and culture so important to other nations; and that immigration puts these ties under threat.

Brimelow marshals an impressive array of demographic and economic data to press this case, stressing in particular that today's immigrants differ significantly—for the worse—from those who came in earlier days. Thus, he presents evidence that over the past few decades the level of skills and education which immigrants bring to the United States has been in a steady decline. He also draws attention to the fact that in the same period the flow of immigrants has increased steadi-

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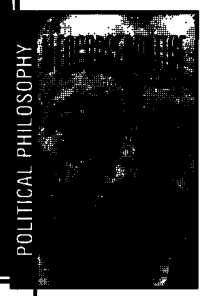

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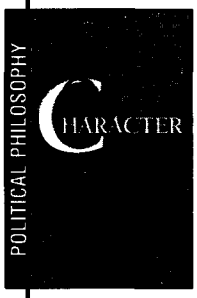
Essays by James Q. Wilson

By James Q. Wilson
Author of The Moral Sense



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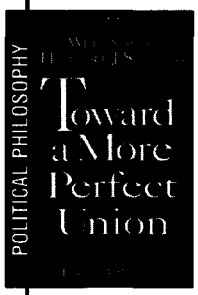

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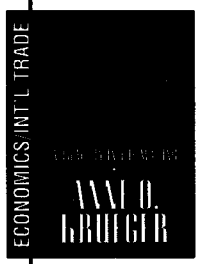

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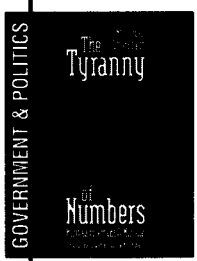

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ly from year to year independently of economic growth, whereas in the past immigration fluctuated with the cycles of the economy. Brimelow suggests that this decoupling can be attributed to the expansion of the American welfare state, which enables immigrants to remain even when jobs are scarce. The net effect of these trends, he concludes, is that immigration brings few if any economic benefits to the United States.

IT IS not, however, the economic drag caused by immigration that appears to trouble Brimelow most. Rather, it is the dramatic increase in the non-European share of the total immigrant mix. During the 1950's, he notes, 26 percent of legal immigrants came from Mexico and other Latin American countries. By the 1980's, that figure had grown to 30 percent, while the share of Asians coming as legal immigrants jumped from 6 to 45 percent.

As a consequence of this shift in composition, writes Brimelow, anyone riding the New York City subway or sitting in an Immigration and Naturalization Service waiting room will find himself "in an underworld that is not just teeming but is also almost entirely colored." He points with dismay to demographic projections indicating that one day in the next century, whites, who have always constituted the "specific ethnic core" of the "American nation," will be a numerical minority in the United States.

Brimelow would have it otherwise. He advocates policies that will result in fewer immigrants overall; and of those who are admitted, he wants more "who look like me." To this end, he favors limiting illegal immigration with such measures as: doubling the size of the U.S. Border Patrol; sealing the U.S.-Mexico border "with a fence, a ditch, and whatever other contrivances that old Yankee ingenuity finds appropriate"; reviving Operation Wetback, the controversial 1954 campaign that rooted out and summarily deported thousands of illegally resident Mexican nationals (along with a few Mexican-American citizens); and eliminating all public benefits to illegal immigrants, including public education, as now mandated by the Supreme Court and challenged by California's Proposition 187.

Brimelow also insists that there must be no more amnesties for illegal aliens, and he suggests that Americans "may eventually" have to carry national identification cards. Finally, he advocates repeal of the clause in the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteeing citizenship to anyone born on American soil (including the offspring of illegal aliens).

The proposals for dealing with legal immigration in *Alien Nation* are equally sweeping. Brimelow suggests we should entertain an "immediate temporary cutoff of all immigration." Short of that, he advocates cutting legal immigration by as much as two-thirds, and replacing the current criteria for admission—based primarily on family unification—with criteria based on skills. He would eliminate affirmative-action benefits for all immigrants, legal and illegal, and would also do away with special categories of immigrants like refugees, who should wait in line, he says, like everyone else.

How strong is Brimelow's case against immigration? And do his proposals for curtailing it make sense?

About some things Brimelow is certainly right. Larger numbers of low-skilled, poorly educated immigrants from Asia and Latin America are coming to the United States than ever before. A growing number of immigrants *are* relying on the welfare system. And immigration is placing real strains on American society, particularly in places like California where the debate's epicenter lies. But about much else, Brimelow is either wrong or, at best, half-right.

Thus, his discussion of the economic effects of immigration is one-sided and ignores evidence that contradicts his case. He pays virtually no attention, for example, to the many ways that labor performed by immigrants—as farm workers, janitors, maids, factory operatives, nurses, not to mention doctors and scientists—serves the economic interests of ordinary Americans. Of those professional economists who have examined the question, most do not share Brimelow's negative appraisal of the contribution immigration makes to the national balance-sheet.

As for Brimelow's warning that immigration is degrading the character of American society, the alarm bells he sounds on this score do not ring in harmony with the firm data we have on the pace at which assimilation—linguistic, cultural, and economic—is proceeding among most immigrant groups today. His argument is so broad-brush that a number of important details are obscured.

Thus, he lumps together Hispanics, whose progress is admittedly problematic, with Asians, who are generally doing quite well. He does not address the implications of the high rate of intermarriage between whites and "people of color." He refuses to take seriously the fact that a majority of Hispanics identify themselves racially as white, a category-blurring phenomenon he only grudgingly acknowledges. He also ignores abundant evidence that individualism, an important dimension of the national culture he seeks to protect, is thriving among immigrants today.

EVEN if Brimelow were to consider and somehow refute all of these objections, one would still be left wondering about his openly racialist vision of our society, which, ironically enough, has something in common with the position advanced by multiculturalists and many immigrant leaders who see our country not as an imperfect melting pot, but as a nation of rival tribes.

Brimelow's policy proposals are also troublesome, not least because he never addresses, or even acknowledges, the monumental difficulties of realizing most of them, or the economic consequences of doing so. It is one thing, for example, to call for sealing our southern border, and quite another to reconcile that goal with the desire of American citizens to travel to and from Mexico with a minimum

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of disruption and delay. It is similarly doubtful that most Americans, much less Mexican-Americans, would tolerate anything like a revival of Operation Wetback with its round-ups and deportations. As for a national identification card, this is a proposal with some merit but, again, one that faces political opposition from both ends of the spectrum and is thus a long way from becoming law.

THOUGH Brimelow's racial preoccupations are wrong-headed and his solutions unrealistic, reasonable people do have grounds to be concerned about the undesirable and long-ignored ways in which immigration has meshed with the welfare state and with such unfair social policies as affirmative action. Brimelow deserves much credit for getting discussion of these issues under way, even if immigration and the heterogeneity it brings are much more woven into the warp and woof of American society than he seems to understand or is ready to concede.

Peer of the Realm

REMEMBERING MY GOOD FRIENDS. By GEORGE WEIDENFELD. *HarperCollins. 483 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by JOHN GROSS

TO THE world at large, George Weidenfeld is best known as a publisher, the co-founder and head of a famous London-based firm. In a somewhat smaller world, he is no less renowned for the dizzying range of his social connections. These aspects of his life naturally occupy a leading place in his newly published memoirs. But they are far from being the whole story: the book also contains a great deal of broad historical interest—and of Jewish interest in particular.

Weidenfeld was born in Vienna in 1919. His father, who came from a small town in Galicia, was a frustrated academic with an abiding passion for Latin who eventually prospered as the director of an insurance company. On his mother's side, he was descended from the Horovitzes, a celebrated rabbinical dynasty.

It was a tangled background, and its complexity makes nonsense of simple either/or stereotypes. Weidenfeld's family was Central European, but it still had living links with Eastern Europe; its members were secular, but still close to religion; they were profoundly Jewish, but deeply Austrian. And of course Vienna itself was an enormously complicated city, with ethnic groups, classes, political factions, and subcultures chafing against one another.

Weidenfeld evokes all this as it impinged on his childhood and upbringing. He does not just evoke, he also anatomizes and analyzes. He gives a brief, illuminating account, for example, of the gradations of Viennese Jewry, especially in its upper reaches. At the top came a small group who had

JOHN GROSS, *whose article, "Matthew Arnold and Us," appeared in our July 1994 issue, is the author of* The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters *and* Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy, *among other books.*

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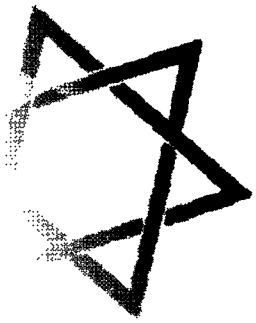

Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination
Marc A. Weiner

Scholars have generally acknowledged Wagner's anti-Semitism but have argued that it is irrelevant to the operas themselves. Marc Weiner challenges that traditional view by asserting that anti-Semitism is a crucial, pervasive feature in Wagner's operas. Weiner argues that the operas exemplify and contribute to a vast collection of images that are patently anti-Semitic—and that were readily recognized as such by nineteenth-century German audiences.

The Jews and Germany
From the "Judeo-German Symbiosis" to the Memory of Auschwitz
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Translated by Daniel Weissbort

The Jews and Germany debunks the modern myth that there once was a Judeo-German symbiosis. Enzo Traverso argues that to the contrary, the attainments of Jews in the German-speaking world were due to the Jews aspiring to be German, with little help from and often against the open hostility of Germans.

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mostly abandoned Judaism and who were completely "acceptable" (under the Hapsburgs, they had been received at court). But even at that stratospheric level there were subdivisions: some became Catholics, others chose the "halfway house" of Protestantism. And at the top of the top came the Rothschilds, who still belonged to synagogues and subscribed to Jewish charities but who remained rigidly aloof from the middle ranks of the community. (When, Weidenfeld recounts, one Hapsburg grandee was asked why he declined to receive the Rothschilds in his palace, he replied, "Well, they don't invite Jews to *their* parties, either.")

Growing up, Weidenfeld developed a keen sense of social codes and strategies, one that was sharpened still further by the worsening political warfare of Austria in the 30's. It was a period in which party allegiances made themselves known in a dozen different ways: through styles of dress, catch phrases, methods of greeting. The socialists and Communists used the clenched fist, "though there were subtle nuances in the angle of your forearm and its distance from your face"; supporters of the Catholic party raised their arms and crooked their fingers in a gesture of benediction; local nationalists favored the fascist salute, arms shooting out at 90 degrees from the body.

And beyond that there were the rituals of Nazism—an object of horror for the young Weidenfeld, but also an object of study. "I always wanted to find out as much as possible about an adversary," he writes, "to learn his 'secret language,' study his traits, manners, and mores and match my perception of the 'other side' with a clinical appraisal of how it sees itself." Later, as a wartime specialist in German propaganda, he was able to pursue this research systematically.

In 1938, immediately after the Nazi takeover of Austria, Weidenfeld left for England. (His parents joined him there the following year, but only after his father had spent fifteen months in a Nazi jail.) At first, alone in London, he led a floating refugee existence, centered mainly in the lobbies of West End hotels. Then, just before the outbreak of war, his linguistic skills won him a job with the new BBC monitoring service, and he found himself quartered in a country house near Evesham, a small town in Worcestershire.

He was a long way from Vienna; and now it was not only England he had to adapt to, but the special world of the BBC. In those days, as he says, the Corporation had a very strong internal culture; and "just as any imperial society leaves its most distinctive traces in outlying garrisons," the BBC ethos could be felt more powerfully in provincial Evesham than in London. Nonetheless, he soon won the confidence of his superiors—his prowess at impersonating Hitler on the air was an undoubted asset—and in 1942 he was transferred to London and a new post. He became "a one-man script factory," churning out talks and features on occupied Europe.

Weidenfeld has some interesting pages on London in this period, and on the impact of the Allied governments in exile that were based there; he also writes amusingly about his first forays into English literary or literary-*cum*-social life. Well before the end of the war he had conceived the idea of a magazine bridging the cultural divide between Britain and the rest of Europe, to be called *Contact*, and in 1946, after much travail, the first issue was finally published.

Contact failed to stay the course, but one consequence was that Weidenfeld branched out into book publishing. First came Contact Books, then Weidenfeld & Nicolson. ("Nicolson" was Nigel Nicolson, the son of Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, as in *Vita and Virginia*.) Everything seemed to bode well for a conventional publishing career. And then an old friend named Flora Solomon, a mentor and mother-figure he found it hard to disregard, told Weidenfeld that it was time he "did his bit" for what was soon to be the state of Israel.

His Zionist links went back to

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his school days, when he had joined a junior Zionist fraternity and his mother had taken him on a brief visit to Palestine. In London, too, before joining the BBC, he had done translation work at the headquarters of the Zionist Organization and glimpsed many of its leading personalities. Later, he had become an intimate of the Marks and Sieff families, retailing tycoons and a dominant force in British Zionism.

Flora Solomon found Weidenfeld a job—a very special one. Soon after the establishment of the state, he was appointed principal personal aide (the official title was *chef de cabinet*) to Chaim Weizmann. Now in his early seventies, the great Zionist leader had been named President of Israel. His health, however, was failing, his eyesight was poor, and he was embittered by the thought that all the real power in the new state lay with the Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. At the same time, Weizmann's enormous prestige and his international links made him much more than a mere figurehead.

Working for him, Weidenfeld got to know many leading Israeli personalities and rising stars (to say nothing of visiting celebrities: Jascha Heifetz and Leonard Bernstein are singled out as among the most vainglorious). His account of the experience provides some striking insights into Weizmann himself, but it is equally worth reading for its picture of an emerging Israeli elite.

WEIDENFELD returned to London toward the end of 1950. But ever since his days with Weizmann he has remained closely involved with Israel as a publisher, a friend, a publicist, and a contact man. Moving in many different social worlds, he has never been afraid to show his sympathies in circles where Israel has not necessarily been popular, or—this too calls for a kind of courage—where it is regarded as less than chic.

But Israel hardly exhausts Weidenfeld's political interests. In Britain, thanks principally to his friendship with the former Labor Prime Minister Harold Wilson (who ultimately made him a peer of the realm), he has spent a good deal of time on the edge of active politics; his publishing connections have enabled him to observe leading American and European statesmen at close quarters; and he has played an intermittent but lively part in cultural politics. One of his best chapters is devoted to a notorious milestone of the cold war, the conference "In Defense of Culture" which took place at Wroclaw, Poland in 1948. It contains a finely sardonic account of the Soviet delegates and their acolytes in full blast, of the British delegates (or at least some of them) mounting a protest against Communist machinations, and of wavering fellow-travelers being softened up and whipped back into line.

Weidenfeld's chapters on publishing are a good deal more entertaining than such things usually are, containing some lively reminiscences of authors—Vladimir Nabokov above all, but many less-well-known figures, too. I particularly cherish the portrait of the Austrian historian Friedrich Heer, a "self-propelling rocket" whose torrential German monologues were punctuated with scraps of imperfectly grasped English: "Every three minutes he would use the phrase, 'Don't fence me in,' without really knowing what it meant. But he was brilliant."

As the book progresses, the social and sociable Weidenfeld is increasingly in evidence. For his friends (and I must own, or rather lay claim, to being one of them), knowing him is rather like having a special channel on your television set: whenever you turn to it, something interesting is bound to be going on. But the pleasures of the dinner party and intimate gossip are not always easy to capture on paper, and I think it must be conceded that in these later chapters there is a certain falling-off, a tendency to list names and settle for safe compliments. This is not to say that they fail to contain much that is enjoyable, including plenty of amiable anecdotes and

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shrewd observations. Still, it is in the earlier sections of the book that most of its value lies, and that value is a permanent one.

Valedictory

THE REVOLT OF THE ELITES AND THE BETRAYAL OF DEMOCRACY. By CHRISTOPHER LASCH. *Norton. 256 pp. $22.00.*

Reviewed by WILFRED M. MCCLAY

THE historian Christopher Lasch, who died of cancer in February of last year, was a rare commodity, a cultural analyst and critic whose work actually grew steadily more interesting, and more independent of conventional ideological constraints, as he grew older. It makes for a poignant experience, then, to read his final book, completed in the weeks just before his death, when his labors must have been sustained by a deep sense of urgency.

Even more than any of his other books, this one is written in direct language, with a broad, nonacademic audience clearly in mind. Perhaps Lasch hoped this work would be a kind of intellectual testament, a distillation of his evolving perspective on contemporary American society. Though historically informed, it makes no pretense of being a work of historical scholarship, devoting most of its attention instead to the discontents of the present day and the prospects for tomorrow.

The view that Lasch takes of these prospects is often bitterly angry and almost unrelievedly gloomy. As his book's title, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, suggests, he renders a harsh judgment on the college-educated professional and managerial elites in America, whom he accuses of having abandoned the common life and subverted democracy.

Never before in American history, Lasch argues, have the privileged classes been so "dangerously isolated" from the rest of the country. Previous American elites had their faults, but these elites were at least rooted in the mores of a particular locale and their behavior was constrained by expectations of *noblesse oblige*. Not so the new elites, who have turned their back on the dreary banalities and soggy pieties of "Middle America" and opted instead for a tourist's-eye view of life: the ceaseless pursuit of excitement, variety, and mobility in the rootless international market of "fast-moving money, glamor, fashion, and popular culture."

*In an increasingly global and in*formation-based economy, the gap—economic, cognitive, and moral—between the lives of those in the elite and the rest of America seems to grow inexorably, as the manufacturing sector continues to decline, and as the middle and working classes experience relentless downward pressures and social disintegration. Indeed, there is "a question," Lasch writes, whether the members of our new elites "think of themselves as Americans at all."

Feeling more closely linked to the pulsating global marketplace than to the mundane life of their locality and country, the new elites prefer the cosmopolitanism of enclaves like Cambridge and Silicon Valley to the parochialism of settled communities. "Patriotism," Lasch observes, "does not rank very high in their hierarchy of virtues"—not nearly so high as "multiculturalism," which "suits them to perfection, conjuring up the agreeable image of a global bazaar" in which the exotic can be "savored indiscriminately, with no questions asked and no commitments required."

THE development of such a class, although it surely reflects a multitude of individual choices, also has deeper and broader sources, which Lasch attempts to explore. To him it is not a paradox, or even very surprising, that the growing integration of the world economy has been accompanied by such a high degree of political instability and disintegration in so many parts of the world. The denationalization of business, he argues, inevitably erodes the foundations of the nation-state itself, and gives rise to a transnational elite whose only loyalty is to itself. One could speculate that the unusual domestic coalition that arose against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—Buchananite conservatives, Naderite liberals, environmentalists, blacks, and trade unionists—found common cause in their shared opposition to this perceived erosion of the nation-state, and to the class that seemed to be benefiting from it.

Lasch's analysis suggests that not *only in the United States, but in* virtually every other advanced country as well, "reactionary" nationalist political movements combining traditional elements of the Left and the Right are likely to arise against the new globalized elite. Such a view recalls the fears of radical-right extremism, "working-class authoritarianism," and McCarthyite populism articulated by social analysts of the 1950's like Seymour Martin Lipset, Richard Hofstadter, Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, and David Riesman. But Lasch has reversed the terms of their analysis, just as he has reversed the terms of José Ortega y Gasset's classic, *The Revolt of the Masses*, in his own title.

Lasch is firmly, though not uncritically, on the side of the "reactionaries." He calls into question the very premises which the new elites (and many other Americans) accept without question: that meritocracy is the fairest and wisest (and most efficient) way to recruit a leadership class; and that the universal desire for "social mobility" is the surest sign of good health in the American economy and society. On the contrary, he argues, meritocracy has only had the effect of intensifying class division because it gives an impregnable "objective" standing to claims of social privilege. And the frenzied pursuit of "social mobility" is, to him, just another way of signaling that the classes from which the ambitious seek to ascend are intrinsically unworthy.

As against such premises, Lasch proposes something else: a recovery of what he calls the "populist tradition," and a fresh under-

WILFRED M. MCCLAY *teaches history at Tulane University and is the author of* The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America.

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standing of democracy, not as a set of procedural or institutional arrangements but as an ethos, one that the new elites have been doing their best to undermine.

Such an understanding, in Lasch's articulation of it, relies heavily upon the contemporary revival of civic-humanist and republican political thought, with its emphasis upon the moral and practical responsibilities of citizenship. It presumes that vigorous public debate is essential to the common life as a component in the education of citizens. It also presumes that the broad distribution of property is a good thing, economically and morally, and that excessive class polarization is inimical to democracy. But it does not make the abolition of economic inequality its governing passion, since it proposes to assure all citizens, no matter how humble their station, of a "civic" equality that transcends wealth and position. Above all, it emphasizes the acquisition of habits of self-reliance, personal responsibility, and individual initiative—not as freestanding "individualist" traits, but as aspects of the "civic virtue" that is required in self-governing communities. Such communities, Lasch asserts, are "the basic units of democratic society," and it is their decline that imperils democracy.

It is noteworthy how many points in this argument echo or resemble those put forward by such other contemporary writers as Mickey Kaus, James Davison Hunter, Robert Reich, Alan Wolfe, Robert Bellah, Wendell Berry, E.J. Dionne, Amitai Etzioni, and, it should be added, Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein. Yet none of them wields the sword of criticism with anything approaching the intensity and abandon of Christopher Lasch, who slashes Left and Right with broad strokes that are sometimes exhilarating, sometimes infuriating, rarely unsanguinary, and almost never boring. Consider this spirited swipe:

> Only in a world in which words and images bear less and less resemblance to the things they appear to describe would it be pos-

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sible for a man like [Robert] Reich to refer to himself, without irony, as Secretary of Labor or to write so glowingly of a society governed by the best and brightest.

Or this:

> The ideology of compassion . . . is one of the principal influences, in its own right, on the subversion of civic life. . . . Compassion has become the human face of contempt.

Or this:

> The civil-rights movement originated as an attack on the injustice of double standards; now the idea of a single standard [is] itself attacked as the crowning example of "institutional racism."

Although the book rips at the Right as well, including attacks on the corrosive effects of "the market," one cannot help noticing that, for Lasch, the Left proves the more enticing and target-rich environment. This fact serves to underscore the painful dilemma faced by Lasch at the end of a career spent largely as a critic of the Left from within the Left. Perhaps nothing had disgusted him more deeply than the American Left's consistent willingness to subordinate political and economic reform to a self-indulgent agenda of cultural and moral radicalism—an agenda that he disdained partly on its own merits, and partly because he knew its pursuit would alienate working-class Americans and wreck any chance at other reforms.

Lasch was right, but he fought a losing battle. As he subjected cultural radicalism to ever more intense criticism, the Left became ever more intransigently committed to its defense, to the point where it is now impossible to imagine the moral renewal of the nation ever coming from that direction. As a consequence, Lasch's most careful and admiring readers in recent years have more and more been found on the Right, a fact that cannot have made him very happy.

LASCH sometimes strains to differentiate his position from the Right as well as from the Left, but in ways that are increasingly unconvincing. In his discussion of the curricular wars roiling higher education, for example, he asserts that both of the quarreling sides are equally wrong. He reminds us that the controversies over "the canon" are far less important than the ever-declining standards of student preparation and performance in our universities. True enough; but it is hard to believe Lasch really thought that conservatives have been unconcerned about declining standards—or that standards of performance are unrelated to the objects of study.

A SOMEWHAT different problem manifests itself in Lasch's concluding chapter on religion, which is peculiarly monochromatic and joyless, offering Calvinism without consolation. Lasch argues, correctly, that most intellectuals and other secularists have a shallow understanding of religion, thinking of it as little more than a crutch for those too weak to face life squarely. Lasch recognizes how wrong this assumption is. Indeed, he praises religion for its willingness to come to terms with human limits, with evil and death—and its unwillingness to oblige our narcissistic conceits about the ultimate significance of our lives.

The secret of happiness that religion teaches, Lasch argues, "lies in renouncing the right to be happy"—a statement that flies in the face of a thousand therapeutic platitudes, and would probably be flatly unintelligible to a growing number of Americans. In the face of a God Who utterly transcends all our concepts and attributions, we have no choice except to abandon our narcissistic fantasies, and fall back into a mature appreciation of our smallness and dependency.

This may be true as far as it goes. But it, too, is very much an intellectual's version of religion, bearing no reference to the particular creedal affirmations that make real religions cohere and persist, or to the real institutions in which believers are obliged to be deeply involved. Indeed, Lasch's conception of God as utter transcendence ignores the fact

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that, at least in the context of the biblical faiths, God's character and His wishes for man have a particular if not always easily discernible content, and are not entirely mysterious.

In brief, Lasch's conception of religion is defined too much by those aspects of contemporary American culture he laments, and not enough by the tenets and features of religious practice, both attractive and unattractive, as they actually exist. That his concluding chapter is entitled "The Soul of Man Under Secularism" indicates where his true interests lie: less in religion itself than in the things against which it might be deployed.

In the end, Lasch's work may be defined too much by his enmities. The rage that drove him made his books and articles compulsively readable, but it may also have prevented them from reaching the highest level of achievement. In particular, his emphasis upon the recovery of civic virtue seems to stem more from his disgust with the slackness, incompetence, and self-indulgence permeating contemporary America than from a positive moral vision. Yet such feelings did push him, in this final book, to a positive awareness that we

> need a revisionist interpretation of American history, one that stresses the degree to which liberal democracy has lived off the borrowed capital of moral and religious traditions antedating the rise of liberalism.

Lasch was absolutely right about that, and right to recognize that one of the principal challenges facing us will be that of renewing and rebuilding this moral capital—a task for which the current academic fashions of victimization and identity politics are doing less than nothing to prepare us.

Liberal democracy, argues *The Revolt of the Elites*, depends upon a prior moral order. It is not a machine that will run of itself on well-laid procedural tracks alone. In this recognition, Lasch may well have had much of America with him. Some such conviction is undoubtedly fueling the unprecedented support in the new Congress, and the country, for what is being called "devolution": the reversion of power from the central government to the states and localities. Many of the measures being proposed reflect the spirit of a revived classical republicanism, and a revitalized conception of citizenship.

One can welcome this development, as I do, but at the same time attend to the questions Lasch would ask of it: how can we preserve the possibility of self-governing communities that promote civic virtue (and all that it presupposes), while at the same time embracing all the possibilities and advantages inherent in an increasingly globalized economy—the *novus ordo seclorum* symbolized for Lasch by those rootless and self-interested new elites? And will it be possible, in the midst of such changes, also to restore the fortunes of the crumbling nation-state upon which the stability and future of so much depends, including the threatened middle classes? These are troubling questions, questions which have no obvious answers. Christopher Lasch, restless shade, deserves our thanks for leaving us with them.

Theodore Ellenoff

1924-1995

Member of the Commentary Publication Committee for almost twenty years and chairman from 1990 to 1992. We mourn the loss of a steadfast supporter and friend.

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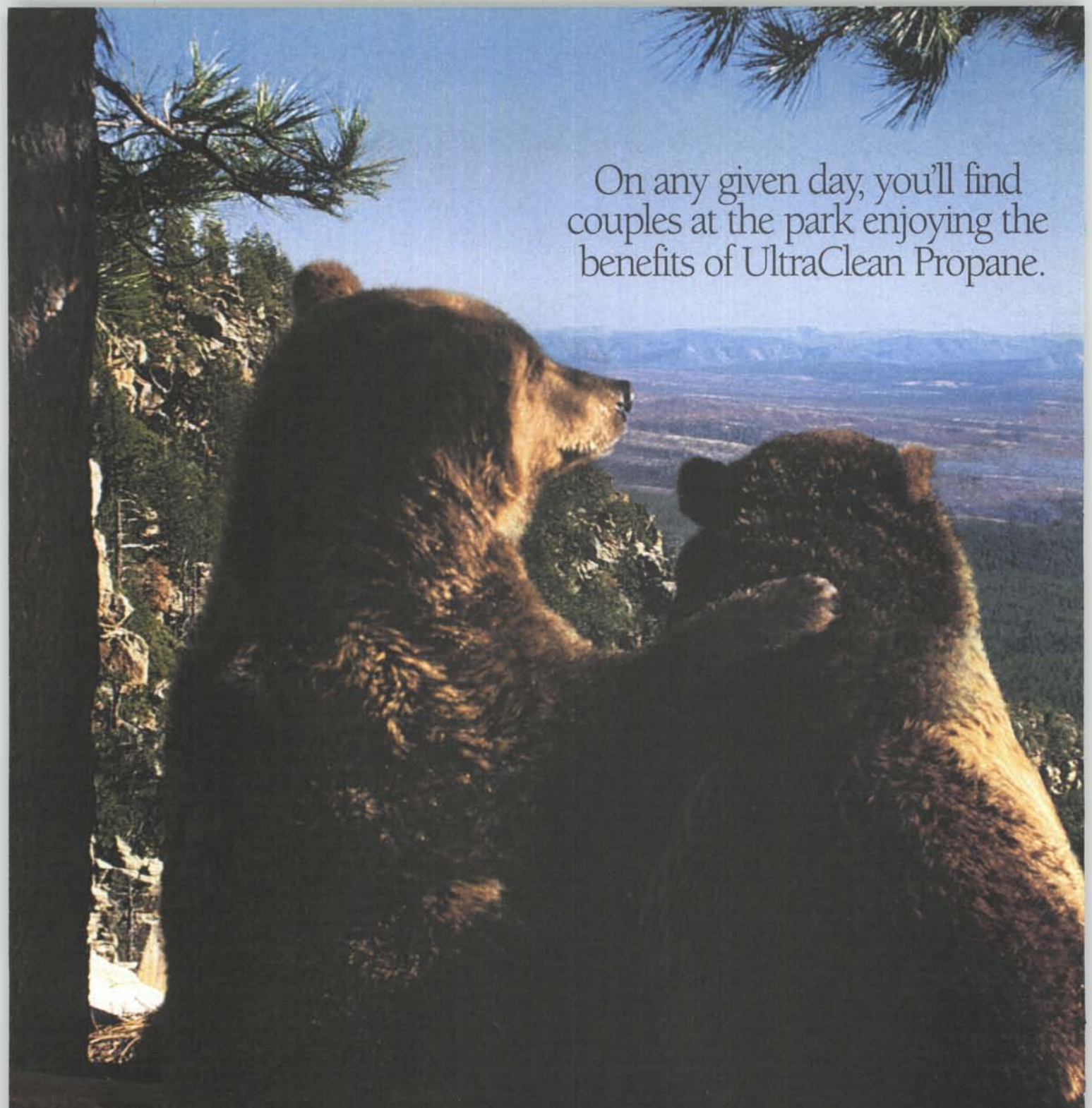

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